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The communication from LEON TROTSKY is his first article on literature since the study of Celine, published some years ago in *The Atlantic Monthly* . . . JAMES AGEE, who travelled recently to the share-cropper country, is writing a book of his impressions. His volume of poems, *Permit Me Voyage,* was published by the Yale University Press . . . VICTOR SERGE, the son of exiled Russian revolutionists, returned to Russia in 1919 and became a member of the executive committee of the Communist International. He was twice imprisoned after 1927, as a member of the opposition, and was only released and allowed to leave the Soviet Union in 1936 as a result of agitation by friends abroad. He now lives in Paris. His book, *Russia Twenty Years After,* was recently published by Hillman-Curl. . . . ELIZABETH BISHOP'S poems and stories have appeared in PARTISAN REVIEW, *Life & Letters Today, New Directions,* and elsewhere. . . . JAMES BURNHAM is an editor of *The New International.*

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TO OUR READERS

Beginning with the next issue, which will appear in November, PARTISAN REVIEW will be published on a quarterly basis. Unexpired subscriptions will be honored on the basis of two quarterly numbers for every three monthly issues. In determining expiration dates, the present double issue will count as one, not two, issues.

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Art and Politics

A Letter to the Editors of PARTISAN REVIEW

YOU HAVE BEEN kind enough to invite me to express my views on the state of present-day arts and letters. I do this not without some hesitation. Since my book *Literature and Revolution* (1923), I have not once returned to the problem of artistic creation and only occasionally have I been able to follow the latest developments in this sphere. I am far from pretending to offer an exhaustive reply. The task of this letter is to correctly pose the question.

Generally speaking, art is an expression of man's need for an harmonious and complete life, that is to say, his need for those major benefits of which a society of classes has deprived him. That is why a protest against reality, either conscious or unconscious, active or passive, optimistic or pessimistic, always forms part of a really creative piece of work. Every new tendency in art has begun with rebellion. Bourgeois society showed its strength throughout long periods of history in the fact that, combining repression and encouragement, boycott and flattery, it was able to control and assimilate every "rebel" movement in art and raise it to the level of official "recognition." But each time this "recognition" betokened, when all is said and done, the approach of trouble. It was then that from the left wing of the academic school or below it—i.e. from the ranks of a new generation of bohemian artists—a fresher revolt would surge up to attain in its turn, after a decent interval, the steps of the academy. Through these stages passed classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism, symbolism, impressionism, cubism, futurism . . . Nevertheless, the union of art and the bourgeoisie remained stable, even if not happy, only so long as the bourgeoisie itself took the initiative and was capable of maintaining a regime both politically and morally "democratic." This was a question of not only giving free rein to artists and playing up to them in every possible way, but also of granting special privileges to the top layer of the working class, and of mastering and subduing the bureaucracy of the unions and workers' parties. All these phenomena exist in the same historical plane.

The decline of bourgeois society means an intolerable exacerbation of social contradictions, which are transformed inevitably into personal contra-

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dictions, calling forth an ever more burning need for a liberating art. Furthermore, a declining capitalism already finds itself completely incapable of offering the minimum conditions for the development of tendencies in art which correspond, however little, to our epoch. It fears superstitiously every new word, for it is no longer a matter of corrections and reforms for capitalism but of life and death. The oppressed masses live their own life. Bohemianism offers too limited a social base. Hence new tendencies take on a more and more violent character, alternating between hope and despair. The artistic schools of the last few decades—cubism, futurism, dadaism, surrealism—follow each other without reaching a complete development. Art, which is the most complex part of culture, the most sensitive and at the same time the least protected, suffers most from the decline and decay of bourgeois society.

To find a solution to this impasse through art itself is impossible. It is a crisis which concerns all culture, beginning at its economic base and ending in the highest spheres of ideology. Art can neither escape the crisis nor partition itself off. Art cannot save itself. It will rot away inevitably—as Grecian art rotted beneath the ruins of a culture founded on slavery—unless present-day society is able to rebuild itself. This task is essentially revolutionary in character. For these reasons the function of art in our epoch is determined by its relation to the revolution.

But precisely in this path history has set a formidable snare for the artist. A whole generation of "leftist" intelligentsia has turned its eyes for the last ten or fifteen years to the East and has bound its lot, in varying degrees, to a victorious revolution, if not to a revolutionary proletariat. Now, this is by no means one and the same thing. In the victorious revolution there is not only the revolution, but there is also the new privileged class which raises itself on the shoulders of the revolution. In reality, the "leftist" intelligentsia has tried to change masters. What has it gained?

The October revolution gave a magnificent impetus to all types of Soviet art. The bureaucratic reaction, on the contrary, has stifled artistic creation with a totalitarian hand. Nothing surprising here! Art is basically a function of the nerves and demands complete sincerity. Even the art of the court of absolute monarchies was based on idealization but not on falsification. The official art of the Soviet Union—and there is no other over there—resembles totalitarian justice, that is to say, it is based on lies and deceit. The goal of justice, as of art, is to exalt the "leader," to fabricate an heroic myth. Human history has never seen anything to equal this in scope and impudence. A few examples will not be superfluous.

The well known Soviet writer, Vsevolod Ivanov, recently broke his silence to proclaim eagerly his solidarity with the justice of Vyshinsky. The general extermination of the old Bolsheviks, "those putrid emanations of

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capitalism," stimulates in the artists a "creative hatred" in Ivanov's words. Romantic, cautious by nature, lyrical, none too outspoken, Ivanov recalls Gorki, in many ways, but in miniature. Not a prostitute by nature, he preferred to remain quiet as long as possible but the time came when silence meant civil and perhaps even physical annihilation. It is not a "creative hatred" that guides the pen of these writers but paralyzing fear.

Alexis Tolstoy, who has finally permitted the courtesan to master the artist, has written a novel expressly to glorify the military exploits of Stalin and Voroshilov at Tsaritsin. In reality, as impartial documents bear witness, the army of Tsaritsin—one of the two dozen armies of the revolution—played a rather sorry role. The two "heroes" were relieved of their posts.* If the honest and simple Chapayev, one of the real heroes of the civil war is glorified in a Soviet film, it is only because he did not live until the "epoch of Stalin" which would have shot him as a Fascist agent. The same Alexis Tolstoy is now writing a drama on the theme of the year 1919: "The Campaign of the Fourteen Powers." The principal heroes of this piece, according to the words of the author, are Lenin, Stalin and Voroshilov. Their images [of Stalin and Voroshilov!] haloed in glory and heroism, will pervade the whole drama." Thus, a talented writer who bears the name of the greatest and most truthful Russian realist, has become a manufacturer of "myths" to order!

Very recently, the 27th of April of this year, the official government paper *Izvestia,* printed a reproduction of a new painting representing Stalin as the organizer of the Tiflis strike in March 1902. However, it appears from documents long known to the public, that Stalin was in prison at that time and besides not in Tiflis but in Batum. This time the lie was too glaring! *Izvestia* was forced to excuse itself the next day for its deplorable blunder. No one knows what happened to the unfortunate picture, which was paid for from State funds.

Dozens, hundreds, thousands of books, films, canvases, sculptures immortalize and glorify such historic "episodes." Thus the numerous pictures devoted to the October revolution do not fail to represent a revolutionary "Center," with Stalin at its head, which never existed. It is necessary to say a few words concerning the gradual preparation of this falsification. Leonid Serebriakov, shot after the Piatakov-Radek trial, drew my attention in 1924 to the publication in *Pravda,* without explanation, of extracts from the minutes of the Central Committee of the latter part of 1917. An old secretary of the Central Committee, Serebriakov had numerous contacts behind the scenes with the party apparatus, and he knew well enough the object of this unexpected publication: it was the first step, still a cautious one,

* See, for example, the article of N. Narkine, "Voroshilov and the Red Army" in Leon Trotsky's *The Stalin School of Falsification.*

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towards the principal Stalinist myth, which now occupies so great a place in Soviet art.

From an historical distance the October insurrection seems much more planned and monolithic than what it proved to be in reality. In fact, there were lacking neither vacillations, search for solutions, nor impulsive beginnings which led nowhere. Thus, at the meeting of the Central Committee on the 16th of October, improvised in one night, in the absence of the most active leaders of the Petrograd Soviets, it was decided to round out the general-staff of the insurrection with an auxiliary "Center" created by the party and composed of Sverdlov, Stalin, Bubnov, Uritzky and Djerjinsky. At the very same time at the meeting of the Petrograd Soviet, a Revolutionary Military Committee was formed which from the moment of its appearance did so much work towards the preparation of the insurrection that the "Center," appointed the night before, was forgotten by everybody, even by its own members. There were more than a few of such improvisations in the whirlwind of this period.* Stalin never belonged to the Military Revolutionary Committee, did not appear at Smolny, staff headquarters of the revolution, had nothing to do with the practical preparation of the insurrection, but was to be found editing *Pravda* and writing drab articles, which were very little read. During the following years nobody once mentioned the "Practical Center." In memoirs of participants in the insurrection—and there is no shortage of these—the name of Stalin is not once mentioned. Stalin himself, in an article on the anniversary of the October insurrection, in the *Pravda* of November 7, 1918, describing all the groups and individuals who took part in the insurrection, does not say a word about the "Practical Center." Nevertheless, the old minutes, discovered by chance in 1924 and falsely interpreted, have served as a base for the bureaucratic legend. In every compilation, bibliographical guide, even in recently edited school books, the revolutionary "Center" has a prominent place with Stalin at its head. Furthermore, no one has tried, not even out of a sense of decency, to explain where and how this "Center" established its headquarters, to whom it gave orders and what they were, and whether minutes were taken where they are. We have here all the features of the Moscow trials.**

With the docility which distinguishes it, Soviet art so-called, has made this bureaucratic myth into one of its favorite subjects for artistic creation. Sverdlov, Djerjinsky, Uritsky and Bubnov are represented in oils or in tempera, seated or standing around Stalin and following his words with rapt attention. The building where the "Center" has headquarters, is intentionally depicted in a vague fashion, in order to avoid the embarrassing question of the address. What can one hope for or demand of artists who

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* This question is fully developed in my *History of the Russian Revolution* in the chapter entitled "Legends of the Bureaucracy."

** For the cinematic elaboration of this mythical "Center," see page 55 of this issue.

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are forced to follow with their brushes the crude lines of what they themselves realize is an historical falsification?

The style of present-day official Soviet painting is called "socialist realism." The name itself has evidently been invented by some high functionary in the department of the arts. This "realism" consists in the imitation of provincial daguerreotypes of the third quarter of the last century; the "socialist" character apparently consists in representing, in the manner of pretentious photography, events which never took place. It is impossible to read Soviet verse and prose without physical disgust, mixed with horror, or to look at reproductions of paintings and sculpture in which functionaries armed with pens, brushes, and scissors, under the supervision of functionaries armed with Mausers, glorify the "great" and "brilliant" leaders, actually devoid of the least spark of genius or greatness. The art of the Stalinist period will remain as the frankest expression of the profound decline of the proletarian revolution.

This state of things is not confined, however, within the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. Under the guise of a belated recognition of the October revolution, the "left" wing of the western intelligentsia has fallen on its knees before the Soviet bureaucracy. As a rule, those artists with some character and talent have kept aloof. But the appearance in the first ranks, of the failures, careerists and nobodys is all the more unfortunate. A rash of Centers and Committees of all sorts has broken out, of secretaries of both sexes, inevitable letters from Romain Rolland, subsidized editions, banquets and congresses, in which it is difficult to trace the line of demarcation between art and the G.P.U. Despite this vast spread of activity, this militarized movement has not produced one single work that was able to outlive its author or its inspirers of the Kremlin.

In the field of painting, the October revolution has found her greatest interpreter not in the U.S.S.R. but in faraway Mexico, not among the official "friends," but in the person of a so-called "enemy of the people" whom the Fourth International is proud to number in its ranks. Nurtured in the artistic cultures of all peoples, all epochs, Diego Rivera has remained Mexican in the most profound fibres of his genius. But that which inspired him in these magnificent frescoes, which lifted him up above the artistic tradition, above contemporary art in a certain sense, above himself, is the mighty blast of the proletarian revolution. Without October, his power of creative penetration into the epic of work, oppression and insurrection, would never have attained such breadth and profundity. Do you wish to see with your own eyes the hidden springs of the social revolution? Look at the frescoes of Rivera. Do you wish to know what revolutionary art is like? Look at the frescoes of Rivera.

Come a little closer and you will see clearly enough, gashes and spots made by vandals: catholics and other reactionaries, including, of course,

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Stalinists. These cuts and gashes give even greater life to the frescoes. You have before you, not simply a "painting," an object of passive esthetic contemplation, but a living part of the class struggle. And it is at the same time a masterpiece!

Only the historical youth of a country which has not yet emerged from the stage of struggle for national independence, has allowed Rivera's revolutionary brush to be used on the walls of the public buildings of Mexico. In the United States it was more difficult. Just as the monks in the Middle Ages, through ignorance, it is true, erased antique literary productions from parchments to cover them with their scholastic ravings, just so Rockefeller's lackeys, but this time maliciously, covered the frescoes of the talented Mexican with their decorative banalities. This recent palimpsest will conclusively show future generations the fate of art degraded in a decaying bourgeois society.

The situation is no better, however, in the country of the October revolution. Incredible as it seemed at first sight, there was no place for the art of Diego Rivera, either in Moscow, or in Leningrad, or in any other section of the U.S.S.R. where the bureaucracy born of the revolution was erecting grandiose palaces and monuments to itself. And how could the Kremlin clique tolerate in its kingdom an artist who paints neither icons representing the "leader" nor life-size portraits of Voroshilov's horse? The closing of the Soviet doors to Rivera will brand forever with an ineffaceable shame the totalitarian dictatorship.

Will it go on much longer—this stifling, this trampling under foot and muddying of everything on which the future of humanity depends? Reliable indications say no. The shameful and pitiable collapse of the cowardly and reactionary politics of the Popular Fronts in Spain and France, on the one hand, and the judicial frame-ups of Moscow, on the other, portend the approach of a major turning point not only in the political sphere, but also in the broader sphere of revolutionary ideology. Even the unfortunate "friends"—but evidently not the intellectual and moral shallows of *The New Republic* and *Nation*—are beginning to tire of the yoke and whip. Art, culture, politics need a new perspective. Without it humanity will not develop. But never before has the prospect been as menacing and catastrophic as now. That is the reason why panic is the dominant state of mind of the bewildered intelligentsia. Those who oppose an irresponsible skepticism to the yoke of Moscow do not weigh heavy in the balance of history. Skepticism is only another form, and not the best, of demoralization. Behind the act, so popular now, of impartially keeping aloof from the Stalinist bureaucracy as well as its revolutionary adversaries, is hidden nine times out of ten a wretched prostration before the difficulties and dangers of history. Nevertheless, verbal subterfuges and petty maneuvers will be of no use. No one will be granted either pardon or respite. In the face of the era

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of wars and revolutions which is drawing near, everyone will have to give an answer: philosophers, poets, painters as well as simple mortals.

In the June issue of your magazine I found a curious letter from an editor of a Chicago magazine, unknown to me. Expressing (by mistake, I hope) his sympathy for your publication, he writes: "I can see no hope however [?] from the Trotskyites or other anemic splinters which have no mass base." These arrogant words tell more about the author than he perhaps wanted to say. They show above all that the laws of development of society have remained a seven times sealed book for him. Not a single progressive idea has begun with a "mass base," otherwise it would not have been a progressive idea. It is only in its last stage that the idea finds its masses—if, of course, it answers the needs of progress. All great movements have begun as "splinters" of older movements. In the beginning, Christianity was only a "splinter" of Judaism; protestantism a "splinter" of Catholicism, that is to say decayed Christianity. The group of Marx and Engels came into existence as a "splinter" of the Hegelian Left. The Communist International germinated during the war from the "splinters" of the Social Democratic International. If these pioneers found themselves able to create a mass base, it was precisely because they did not fear isolation. They knew beforehand that the quality of their ideas would be transformed into quantity. These "splinters" did not suffer from anemia; on the contrary, they carried within themselves the germs of the great historical movements of tomorrow.

In very much the same way, to repeat, a progressive movement occurs in art. When an artistic tendency has exhausted its creative resources, creative "splinters" separate from it, which are able to look at the world with new eyes. The more daring the pioneers show in their ideas and actions, the more bitterly they oppose themselves to established authority which rests on a conservative "mass base," the more conventional souls, skeptics, and snobs are inclined to see in the pioneers, impotent eccentrics or "anemic splinters." But in the last analysis it is the conventional souls, skeptics and snobs who are wrong—and life passes them by.

The Thermidorian bureaucracy, to whom one cannot deny either a certain animal sense of danger or a strong instinct of self-preservation, is not at all inclined to estimate its revolutionary adversaries with such wholehearted disdain, a disdain which is often coupled with lightness and inconsistency. In the Moscow trials, Stalin, who is not a venturesome player by nature, staked on the struggle against "Trotskyism," the fate of the Kremlin oligarchy as well as his own personal destiny. How can one explain this fact? The furious international campaign against "Trotskyism," for which a parallel in history will be difficult to find, would be absolutely inexplicable if the "splinters" were not endowed with an enormous vitality. He who does not see this today will see it better tomorrow.

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As if to complete his self-portrait with one brilliant stroke, your Chicago correspondent vows—what bravery!—to meet you in a future concentration camp—either fascist or "communist." A fine program! To tremble at the thought of a concentration camp is certainly not admirable. But is it much better to foredoom oneself and one's ideas to this grim hospitality? With the Bolshevik "amoralism" which is characteristic of us, we are ready to suggest that gentlemen—by no means anemic—who capitulate before the fight and without a fight really deserve nothing better than the concentration camp.

It would be a different matter if your correspondent simply said: in the sphere of literature and art we wish no supervision on the part of "Trotskyists" any more than from the Stalinists. This protest would be, in essence, absolutely just. One can only retort that to aim it at those who are termed "Trotskyists" would be to batter in an open door. The ideological base of the conflict between the Fourth and Third Internationals is the profound disagreement not only on the tasks of the party but in general on the entire material and spiritual life of mankind.

The real crisis of civilization is above all the crisis of revolutionary leadership. Stalinism is the greatest element of reaction in this crisis. Without a new flag and a new program it is impossible to create a *revolutionary* mass base; consequently it is impossible to rescue society from its dilemma. But a truly revolutionary party is neither able nor willing to take upon itself the task of "leading" and even less of commanding art, either before or after the conquest of power. Such a pretension could only enter the head of a bureaucracy—ignorant and impudent, intoxicated with its totalitarian power —which has become the antithesis of the proletarian revolution. Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but by its very essence, cannot tolerate them. Artistic creation has its laws—even when it consciously serves a social movement. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with lies, hypocrisy and the spirit of conformity. Art can become a strong ally of revolution only in so far as it remains faithful to itself. Poets, painters, sculptors and musicians will themselves find their own approach and methods, if the struggle for freedom of oppressed classes and peoples scatters the clouds of skepticism and of pessimism which cover the horizon of mankind. The first condition of this regeneration is the overthrow of the domination of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

May your magazine take its place in the victorious army of socialism and not in a concentration camp!

Coyoacan, D. F., June 18, 1938 LEON TROTSKY.

(*Translated by Nancy and Dwight Macdonald*)

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The English Literary Left

F. W. Dupee

In France and America left-wing literature has been largely a prose literature. In England, however, the novelists (Hanley, Calder-Marshall, Hampson) are negligible in comparison with the group of poets gathered around W. H. Auden. The one prose writer of importance is Christopher Isherwood, who belongs to the Auden circle. Comparatively negligible too are the critics and journalists associated with *Left Review*. Edgell Rickword, Montagu Slater, Alick West—these writers comprise the official, the Communist Party Left, with which the Auden circle is linked through Stephen Spender and C. Day Lewis, its political wing. Its other wing, literary in the traditional sense, opposed to the pamphlet-poem and the politically inflated reputation, is made up of Geoffrey Grigson, who edits the small bi-monthly *New Verse,* and Louis MacNeice, its chief contributor. In the center of the Auden circle, looking both ways, is W. H. Auden himself.

The English Renaissance

In the light of the American Left, there is a great deal that is ambiguous about the Auden circle. Politically they fall short of the specifications for a left-wing group, and in a literary sense they tend to exceed them. Orientated though they are towards the Communist Party, yet there has been little direct transposition of party politics into their writing; and as poets they have much in common with the purely literary avant-garde movements of the 20's. No such ambivalence can be ascribed to the American Left. In the United States the bohemian-esthetic tradition of the 20's was largely played out when the Depression came, and little friction was encountered by the Communist Party in its literary operations, for it was working in a cultural vacuum. For this reason, and because the party was able to divert writers back to a venerable literary populism which had survived through the 20's as a thin, secondary current, the program for a "proletarian literature" succeeded in America—succeeded, that is, in influencing enough writers to produce an organized movement. Among English writers, however,

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no such swift and radical adjustment to the Stalinist program was possible. The available literary tradition in Britain was aristocratic; it was, moreover, still comparatively vigorous. And the young English poets glanced back towards that tradition quite as often as they looked ahead towards any other.

A comparison of Stephen Spender's *The Destructive Element* with Granville Hicks' *The Great Tradition* will reveal the crux of the difference between the two Lefts. Both Hicks and Spender torture the literary past in order to compel it to yield the justification for a contemporary literature of politics and class struggle. But Hicks leaves the past in ruins and the Communist Party in solitary possession of the present. Spender on the other hand is enormously respectful towards the older writers; and after, as it were, extorting from them the admission that they were individualists, he turns the weapon of individual integrity—*their* weapon—on the Communists. Spender is, of course, a sensitive and valuable critic; and his superiority over Granville Hicks is a measure of the greater literacy of the English movement.

Yet the writers whom Spender so respectfully salutes as "ancestors" were not in most cases English. Henry James and T. S. Eliot were Americans; Joyce and Yeats were Irish. England had produced in the 20's several modern personalities (D. H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis) but no organized modernist movement; and the Auden circle has had the task of realizing such a movement in the 30's. In architecture, the theater, and the plastic arts England had likewise missed the boat; and only in the present decade have abstract and surrealist painting, a functional architecture and an expressionist theater begun to appear in force on the English scene. The poetry of the Auden circle is thus but one feature of a tardy cultural awakening which extends to several fields.

England's belated modernism came to birth, however, under conditions which have curiously modified both its character and its mission. Not a boom, but a depression, had prepared its coming. For a century English society had permitted no really rebellious esthetic movement to cling for long to its monolithic crags; but, shaken a little by the Depression, it developed rifts in which a modern culture might take precarious root. And this culture could hardly fail to take note of its environment, could not but draw conclusions, political and economic, from the conditions which alone had made it possible. So the esthetic program of the New Poetry was reinforced by a messianic purpose unknown to such movements in the past; and the heritage of symbolism, surrealism and expressionism was expended on a literature of propaganda. In W. H. Auden virtuosity unites with didacticism.

With its miscellany of styles and ideas, its shifting points of view and its incredible contradictions, the world of the New Poetry seems a veritable fantasia of modern art and ideology. It has had many jobs to do, and often

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it has confused them one with another. In addition to the task of erecting on English soil the technical machinery of modernist literature, it has had the mission of enlightening benighted Britain on sex. A revolt against "puritanism"—that is to say, against bourgeois family morality—has figured in the majority of post-war literary movements. In England, however, the belated reformers were faced, not only with a neurotic family life, but with a prostrated society. Hence they could not be satisfied to derive from the new psychology merely a literary program and a bohemian ethic. The Freudian perspective was raised to a social gospel, sometimes competing with the historical prespective of Marxism, but more often simply melting into it.

So long as psychology was not confused with politics, but operated as an alternative and a foil, it proved in many cases an effective instrument of literary creation. The Healer who figures as a hero in Auden's early work is not only a non-political but an anti-political conception; yet Auden's most militant, brilliant and self-consistent poetry is built around it. But the big extravaganzas of a later period, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *The Ascent of* F6, indiscriminately tap both psychology and politics, and are essentially incoherent. Where Auden went, the others followed. The proletariat became, for many a writer of the English Left, the social embodiment of libido; in Charles Madge's "darksome working man" and Sylvia Warner's "kiln-man" the gypsies of D. H. Lawrence had a new incarnation; in the floods, the steamrollers and other dream symbols which were invoked to represent it, the revolution acquired the character of emancipator for the inhibited middle classes; and in *The Wild Goose Chase,* Rex Warner's interminable "fable," the ambition to "synthesize Marx and Freud" was finally reduced to its essential absurdity. Yet the failure of so many of these writings, like the failure of Auden's later plays, cannot be attributed to ideological confusion alone, for this confusion is only symptomatic of a meager, confused and synthetic experience.

In their early period Auden and some of his fellow poets had another important mission; one which they have since dropped. The economic crisis, coinciding with the long-standing crisis in English culture, called forth in the first instance, not a socialist but a nationalist reaction from the young poets; and Auden was intensely conscious of himself as the prophet of a resurgent Britain. His early verse is vibrant with the sense of an England depressed, inert, helmless and looking for a sign. In this doggerel poem, "Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own," he ran through the symptoms of national decadence and complained that "they quietly undersold us with their cheaper trade abroad." And at the end of *The Orators* (1932) he invoked the leader who should restore

To England's story
The directed calm, the actual glory.

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The concern for England's glory thus re-entered serious poetry, from which it had been absent for a generation. T. S. Eliot, to be sure, had tried to foster certain institutional revivals; but these were directed, not towards a strictly English resurgence, but towards implicating Britain in a renaissance of the Latin internationalism of the medieval system. Auden was not interested in institutions but in *inspiration;* in the revival of libidinal energy as a cure for English crime, disease and fear of life. The healer replaced the priest in his conception, and for the Dantesque spirituality of Eliot he would have substituted the primitive Anglo-Saxon stoicism of Gisli the Outlaw. Rejecting Eliot's tradition, he also discarded the international style, and working from Skelton and the sagas he developed the hard, compact, de-latinized austerities of his early manner. Day Lewis also showed nationalistic tendencies in that period, but he was far less radical than Auden. He merely sought to restore England's glory through reviving the cult of fresh air and natural magic; and from Hopkins and the English Romantics he compounded his famous nougat-paste style. Other writers who have since become identified with Auden's circle had no traffic with this English revivalism. Louis MacNeice was too much the cosmopolitan Irishman, and Stephen Spender too deeply rooted in a family tradition of liberal idealism. And in 1933 the anti-fascist movement intervened to arrest the nationalistic tendencies of Auden and Lewis and to bring the group together on a common political basis.

"The Rupert Brooke of the Depression"

Stephen Spender and his fellow poets have ranged through English literature in search of "ancestors"; but the Freudian censor appears to have been at work in them, for they have studiously ignored Shaw, Wells, and Rupert Brooke, who are is so many respects their true antecedents.

From their early writings it is clear that communism first appealed to them as a possible solution for their own intellectual dilemmas. Politically, Stephen Spender matured more rapidly than the others. Somewhat *manqué* as a poet, he has nevertheless the gift of logic, of drawing general conclusions from his experience, and of discarding ideas when they no longer fit in with what he observes. Where MacNeice, ideologically speaking, exhibits no progression whatever, and Auden shuttles continually back and forth between two fixed points, Spender's work falls readily into a pattern of development, simple but pronounced.

His earliest verse, invoking Time, Death and Frustration, speaks the usual language of introversion. His first social emotion appears in such poems as "The Port" and "The Prisoners": it is an emotion of pity: pity for the mad, the poor, the confined. He is trying to bring to bear on the Crisis the detached compassion with which Wilfred Owen had endured the

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War. But as Spender himself has said, writing of Owen: "The difficulty is that poetry inspired by pity is dependent on that repeated stimulus for its inspiration." But this is impossible: the alternative is some ponderable link with reality: love, communism, immersion in the external world. He begins accordingly to celebrate sexual health and comradeship, the new social order, the world of machines and workers. And finally, in *Vienna* (1934) he contrasts the "stalking inner worlds" of a corrupted individuality with the revolutionary heroism of the Vienna workers. "These," he decides, "are our ancestors." He had accepted, *as a poet,* the revolutionary imperative.

Vienna was written as the result of a trip to Austria. Like the visits which Auden and Isherwood had paid to Berlin a few years earlier, Spender's stay in Vienna provided a fund of experience enormously important to his creative work and his political development.

After 1934 his work was largely done in prose. He was seeking some basis on which he could cooperate with, or even join, the Communist Party. At first his approach to Stalinism was a literary one; it revolved around the question of "proletarian literature"; and Spender feared, rightly enough, that to accept the Stalinist program meant to surrender his rights and his integrity to party control and to "RAPPism." He failed, however, to examine "proletarian literature" as a theory, or to connect the theory and the excesses of RAPPism with the bureaucratic emergencies which had occasioned them. By 1936, however, he had already found a broader base for his essentially personal communism; a base which permitted him to draw closer to the Communist Party. In that year he published *Forward from Liberalism.* This characteristically candid and well-intentioned book stated with much eloquence the case against capitalism and for socialism; but it developed a blind spot as to ways and means. He had come to socialism, he admitted, as a liberal, and because it was a stage through which the liberal mind must pass en route towards the ultimate fulfillment of its ideals of freedom. The unconscious class egotism of this view—as though the proletariat's function were to realize for certain righteous bourgeois types the lofty plans which their own class had somehow bungled—was strictly in the tradition of English social dilettantism. It was possible only in a country where the bourgeoisie, having lived unchallenged for generations, could regard their world as the field in which historical questions were all finally decided. Thus the Fabianism of Shaw and Squire, of Brooke and Lady Warwick, made its reappearance in a young poet of the 30's, assuming new forms in keeping with the new epoch. The social democracy on which the older Fabians had leaned was now discredited; the new Fabians discovered the Comintern. And at the same time, of course, the Comintern began to seek out the Fabians. English reformism thus acquired what it had badly needed: the tradition of a successful revolution; and Stalinism possessed itself of a respectable facade for its adventures in class collaboration. For Stephen

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Spender the emergency manœuvers of the Soviet foreign office became the norms of socialist action; the People's Fronts of Spain and France he accepted as full-fledged socialist governments; and the injustices, the tyrannies, the crimes of the Soviet régime were put down as misdemeanors which the new "democratic constitution" would correct. Spender's authorities on the Soviet Union, needless to say, were the indispensable Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in whose ancient persons the Fabianism of two epochs was united.

In *Forward from Liberalism* Spender declared that it was a "betrayal of his function" for the intellectual to become the apologist for a political party. The intellectual, he said, must "judge and criticize" the party line from the viewpoint of absolute justice, the final end of politics. However, in the two-odd years of his membership in the Communist Party (he joined it shortly after the appearance of *Forward from Liberalism*) Spender has found no occasion to exercise publicly the right to "judge and criticize."

He has recently published a verse play written for the Group Theatre in London. *Trial of a Judge* is not strong either as poetry or as drama. The characters are poorly-contrived effigies of types popularized by the anti-fascist movement; the situations are as banal as the editorials of the *Daily Worker;* and the infusion of T. S. Eliot has given the verse no more than a factitious "atmosphere." But the play is curious as a comment on Spender's ideological development since 1934. With its Central European setting, it shows him still clinging to his early experiences. It is as though the present line of the Comintern had conspired with the meagerness of his own English experience, to convince him that the tragic political subject is confined to Central Europe. But from his memories of the Vienna journey he now draws rather different conclusions. *Trial of a Judge* is an attempt to construct a tragedy out of the predicament of a liberal faced with the choice between communism and fascism. The play is probably an accurate reflection of history as it looks to supporters of the People's Front, for the fate of society is made to hinge on the liberal's decision, and the communists in the play are reduced to the role of suppliants. Thus for Spender the locus of tragedy has moved up a step in the social scale since he composed *Vienna.* In that poem the heroes were workers tragically betrayed by their leaders and—by liberals.

The Healer

Where Spender, as a poet, remains the captive of his reasoning mind, with its abstract data and its memories of other literature, Auden, drawing on latent memories of the ruined Midlands of his childhood, is able to build around his emotions an entire landscape of images, fearful in their grotesque materiality. Among his fellow writers Auden is really the *poet*: he alone is really sensitive to the *zeitgeist;* the others are merely sensitive to him.

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His powers of literary assimilation are not unconnected with this mediumistic faculty. Among the innumerable writers he has tapped, he obviously owes most to Lawrence and Eliot (his early rejection of Eliot did not prevent his being greatly influenced by him both then and later on). Different as these two writers are, yet Auden reconciled them by incorporating them as part of the living experience of his time. A waste land which has acquired the features of the depressed areas, the landscape of his early poems is peopled with spectral neurasthenics which resemble Lawrence characters stripped of their sex, their mannerisms, their personalities—of everything but their "symptoms."

We must remember, however, that Eliot and Lawrence were children of the static pre-war system: for all the intensity of their beliefs they could not but see the world as fixed in its agony. Auden's world on the contrary is one in which change is implied in the very immobility of the old order. On one side are arrayed the "Holders of one position, wrong for years"; on the other side is the Adversary who is waiting and plotting to blow them off the map.

The falling leaves know it, the children,
At play on the fuming alkali-tip
Or by the flooded football ground, know it——
This is the dragon's day, the devourer's . . .

While Spender imports the tragic subject from abroad, Auden makes capital out of poverty at home, uncovers the kernel of violence in the husk of inertia, the tragedy in the pathos of England, where

No one will ever know
For what conversion brilliant capital is waiting,
What ugly feast may village band be celebrating;
For no one goes
Further than railhead or the ends of piers,
Will neither go nor send his son
Further through foothills than the rotting stack
Where gaitered gamekeeper with dog and gun
Will shout 'Turn back.'

These lines belong to the period (1928-34) when Auden was a genuinely subversive force in English poetry, his vision unimpaired by loyalties to friend or party. Day Lewis was at that time still seeking private norms in marriage and fatherhood. Today Lewis salutes each new repulse of history with a fresh gust of "democratic" optimism. And Auden? A *Left Review* critic complains that he has drifted into "the simple exploration of individuality": look at the plaintive lyrics, the rueful public clowning, the growing tendency to challenge the pamphlet in the name of the poem, Marxism in the name of Love. This is a retreat! True, but is it not possible

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that Auden's mood reflects, obscurely, the bankruptcy of the English Left and its ideals—that obvious bankruptcy which nobody dares declare?

Auden is the creative leader of his group—that is acknowledged. But in other respects he is their captive. He lacks a critical intelligence; and one cannot always be sure whether the hub is turning the spokes or the spokes the hub. At present we may guess that Auden is the captive of his friends' reformist gentility, their politically fostered blindness, the rationalized prudence of their democratic front against fascism—as though fascism were a respecter of prudence, of democracy!

The *Left Review* critic, although he stops short of a prescription, is nevertheless right in his diagnosis of Auden's present state of mind. The poet who began as the impersonal voice of a generation, whose greatest merit was the power to generalize his experience, seems, like Eliot before him, in his later work to have been thrust deeper and deeper into his own ego. In order to retrace the stages by which Auden arrived where he is today, we may follow the evolution of his favorite conception: the figure of the Healer. In his ambiguities and his successive incarnations, this transfigured scientist, who talks the clipped jargon of the clinic and views the world as a psychiatric ward, embodies the poet's shifting attitudes towards the fact of social change.

The idea of the Healer seems to have been suggested to Auden by two actual psychiatrists: Homer Lane and Georg Walther Groddeck, with whose teachings he came in contact in Berlin in 1929. "Teachings" rather than "theories" because, in addition to sharing a similar conviction as to the functional nature of disease and crime, both men strove to unite belief and practice in their own lives, and both endeavored to cure by example. Homer Lane, who experimented in progressive penology, was fiercely anti-authoritarian. And Groddeck, a practicing psychiatrist, underwent at one point in his career a dramatic conversion from hypnotic methods of therapy, which brought into play the will of the physician, to a technique of suggestion and reeducation. From the ideas and experiences of these men, Auden appears to have derived his repugnance to the will and all forms of coercive change, and, conversely, his doctrine of Love—"What can be loved (he has said) can be cured."

In any case, the Healer is a kind of psychiatric saint or redeemer; but in order to emphasize his benign aspects Auden has given him a terroristic *alter ego;* and the Healer is always undergoing transformations from one one self to the other.

His earliest appearance seems to have been in certain of the *Poems* (1930). He is here invoked as the Enemy, and if he foreshadows the new order he also signifies the unqualified extinction of the old. "Death, death of the grain, our death, Death of the old gang." In later poems we shall see him transformed into Eros Paidogogus, the embodiment of love

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in its "reeducative" aspects. But for the present he is love the avenger, with a hawk's vision of the undifferentiated loveless and neurasthenic mass: he is Anteros who punishes with death those who from greed or fear, egotism or false shame, pervert the norms of sexuality and deny the affection of others. Yet suddenly in the very last poem in the volume the Enemy becomes a friend: "Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all." And he is called on to

> *Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch*
> *Curing the intolerable neural itch,*
> *The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy . . .*

The Enemy thus stands forth in his counter-role as the psychiatric saint.

The next appearance of the Healer is in *The Orator* (1932). Here, as the Airman, he has acquired a profession in keeping with his hawk's eye vision. And we are now taken into his confidence and introduced to his journals: not he, but the old order, is now the Enemy. The Airman is a young man who, operating with a few friends from a country house called "The Hollies," is plotting to overthrow "society." His plan of attack, while it simulates a political insurrection, consists essentially in undermining the old order through disrupting its habitual thought associations. These are accordingly analysed, plotted and diagrammed in the Airman's journal, as the defenses of some well-fortified country might be studied by an army that proposed to invade it. At the very last, however, when the great attack is in its seventh day, the Airman has a sudden change of heart, paralleling the abrupt transformation of the Enemy at the end of the earlier volume. "Do not imagine," he says to himself, "that you, no more than any other conqueror, can escape the mark of grossness." And he repudiates coercion and violence for humility and understanding.

Yet in 1933, just a year after the appearance of *The Orators,* Auden writes the play, *The Dance of Death,* and in the central figure of the Dancer revives his former hero—only to slay him summarily with the apparition of Karl Marx. Caricatured and discredited, the specter of the psychological redeemer appears to be laid for good. But in reality he is not. In *The Ascent of F6* (1936) the old problem of coercion is resuscitated, in a new form, and the Healer has yet another incarnation, this time sympathetic, in the character of the Abbott. But, devoid alike of scientific professions and a terroristic *alter ego,* the Abbott simply realizes all the devout and ritualistic tendencies inherent in the Healer type from the beginning. In later lyrics the type becomes merged with the Dioscuri—which are merely a literary symbol for astronomical benevolence—or more often with the poet himself, who now preaches love and forbearance in his own voice.

Psychology or politics? Inner reform or social revolution? Such are the issues implied in those writings of Auden's that center around the figure of the Healer. And the survival of this unreal dilemma is a curious re-

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flection, not only on Auden, but on the English Left itself. As Spender in *Vienna* had declared the revolutionary tradition his own, so Auden in *The Dance of Death* had banished the psychiatrist for Marx. It is hardly necessary to point out that the militant period of Auden and Spender corresponded to the years of hope and struggle in the revolutionary movement itself. But as the movement deteriorated, sowing reformist manoeuvers and reaping disasters, so there emerged once more that vast vague Atlantis of idealist illusion on which, so long as it is visible, the intelligentsia will set their hopes. And the poets returned to the timeless world of Freud and the "liberal mind." It is true that, even in the years 1932-34, Auden and Spender had reservations when it came to Marxist politics. Nor can *Vienna* and *The Dance of Death* be described as formidable contributions to revolutionary literature. They were the products of a mood—solemn in Spender's case, breezy in Auden's—a mood of discovery; but the emotion was no less real for being immature. It needed experience to deepen and confirm it: experience of the class struggle in their own land, among their own people, their old associations. Yet hardly had Spender returned from Austria and Auden slain the Healer, than the Comintern discovered that English capitalism was "progressive." The class struggle was promptly exported to Central Europe and Spain, and the poets were invited to make their peace with labor politicians, titled democrats, and lady novelists with a passion for humanity. To be sure, the Stalinist critics continued to lecture them, to recommend them to "join the workers"; but what good were their sermons when the workers had to all appearances joined the bourgeoisie?

In Spender's case the changed political situation merely meant that his poetry was brought into line with his politics, and the militancy of *Vienna* dissolved into the People's Front perspective of *Trial of a Judge.* But Auden is less responsive to the programs of political parties than he is to his general environment; and after 1935 that environment could only be conducive to *anxiety.* Auden became as a man afflicted with a dual identity: Auden the Public Figure gave support to Stalinist causes, wrote accomplished poems for the Medical Aid fund, visited the scenes of democracy's holy wars and reported them for the liberal weeklies. The private Auden envisioned socialism more and more as a dream of the future, gave expression to his fears for the present in long, melancholy, personal lyrics (*Look, Stranger*), which seem to be patterned on Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach,* and endeavored, with a rather ineffectual spirituality, to counteract the obviously disastrous trend of the *Zeitgeist.*

In the houses
The little pianos are closed, and the clock strikes.
And all sway forward on the dangerous flood
Of history, that never sleeps or dies,
And, held one moment, burns the hand.

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Such lines, and there are many such in the later poems, can only be interpreted as *warnings*.

Politics and Bohemia

A few years ago, in "A Hope for Poetry", Day Lewis cited as models for the Auden circle those rare poets of modern Britain who, rooting themselves in monasteries or universities, had refused to be plucked up, transplanted to the gardens of popular culture, and there domesticated. Today this disciple of Gerard Hopkins occupies a post on the Book Society with Sir Hugh Walpole and J. B. Priestley. Lewis is an extreme case, and he has perhaps landed in the place reserved for him by his essential talents. But Auden as playwright, parodist and author of amusing travel books has a foot in Bloomsbury too, and Spender is the intensely busy poet and publicist of petit-bourgeois democracy.

In recoiling from the years of militancy into the variegated social and psychological reformism of the present, they have made a political truce with the bourgeoisie; and a younger literary generation in England already suspects them of having made an esthetic truce as well. Politics has razed Bohemia and replaced its strict tabus with the rough and ready touchstones of parties engaged in the struggle for power and influence. So long as the Stalinist grouping, for which the Auden circle writes, preserved its revolutionary and class character, it constituted a collectivity with homogeneous social values, to which the Auden circle were free to bring their own esthetic. Both camps gained from the connection: *New Verse* was a "little magazine" with a social conscience, and *Left Review* a political journal with a mature attitude towards the arts. But as the Stalinist grouping, in quest of the Democratic Front, expands beyond its original base, cutting across lines of class, interest and value, the Auden circle finds itself addressing an audience which embraces a social field so large that it is practically commensurate with society as a whole. And what is society as a whole but capitalist society, what are its values but the values of the bourgeoisie?

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Knoxville: Summer of 1915

James Agee

WE ARE talking now of summer evenings in Knoxville Tennessee in the time that I lived there so successfully disguised to myself as a child. It was a little bit mixed sort of block, fairly solidly lower middle class, with one or two juts apiece on either side of that. The houses corresponded: middlesized gracefully fretted wood houses built in the late nineties and early nineteen hundreds, with small front and side and more spacious back yards, and trees in the yards, and porches. These were softwooded trees, poplars, tulip trees, cottonwoods. There were fences around one or two of the houses, but mainly the yards ran into each other with only now and then a low hedge that wasn't doing very well. There were few good friends among the grown people, and they were not poor enough for the other sort of intimate acquaintance, but everyone nodded and spoke, and even might talk short times, trivially, and at the two extremes of the general or the particular, and ordinarily nextdoor neighbors talked quite a bit when they happened to run into each other, and never paid calls. The men were mostly small businessmen, one or two very modestly executives, one or two worked with their hands, most of them clerical, and most of them between thiry and fortyfive.

But it is of these evenings, I speak.

Supper was at six and was over by half past. There was still daylight, shining softly and with a tarnish, like the lining of a shell; and the carbon lamps lifted at the corners were on in the light, and the locusts were started, and the fire flies were out, and a few frogs were flopping in the dewy grass, by the time the fathers and the children came out. The children ran out first hell bent and yelling those names by which they were known; then the fathers sank out leisurely in crossed suspenders, their collars removed and their necks looking tall and shy. The mothers stayed back in the kitchen washing and drying, putting things away, recrossing their traceless footsteps like the lifetime journeys of bees, measuring out the dry cocoa for breakfast. When they came out they had taken off their aprons and their skirts were dampened and they sat in rockers on their porches quietly.

It is not of the games children play in the evening that I want to speak now, it is of a contemporaneous atmosphere that has little to do with them:

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that of the fathers of families, each in his space of lawn, his shirt fishlike pale in the unnatural light and his face nearly anonymous, hosing their lawns. The hoses were attached at spiggots that stood out of the brick foundations of the houses. The nozzles were variously set but usually so there was a long sweet stream of spray, the nozzle wet in the hand, the water trickling the right forearm and the peeled-back cuff, and the water whishing out a long loose and low-curved cone, and so gentle a sound. First an insane noise of violence in the nozzle, then the still irregular sound of adjustment, then the smoothing into steadiness and a pitch as accurately tuned to the size and style of stream as any violin. So many qualities of sound out of one hose: so many choral differences out of those several hoses that were in earshot. Out of any one hose, the almost dead silence of the release, and the short still arch of the separate big drops, silent as a held breath, and the only noise the flattering noise on leaves and the slapped grass at the fall of each big drop. That, and the intense hiss with the intense stream; that, and that same intensity not growing less but growing more quiet and delicate with the turn of the nozzle, up to that extreme tender whisper when the water was just a wide bell of film. Chiefly, though, the hoses were set much alike, in a compromise between distance and tenderness of spray, (and quite surely a sense of art behind this compromise, and a quiet, deep joy, too real to recognize itself), and the sounds therefore were pitched much alike; pointed by the snorting start of a new hose; decorated by some man playful with the nozzle; left empty, like God by the sparrow's fall, when any single one of them desists: and all, though near alike, of various pitch; and in this unison. These sweet pale streamings in the light lift out their pallors and their voices all together, mothers hushing their children, the hushing unnaturally prolonged, the men gentle and silent and each snail-like withdrawn into the quietude of what he singly is doing, the urination of huge children stood loosely military against an invisible wall, and gently happy and peaceful, tasting the mean goodness of their living like the last of their suppers in their mouths; while the locusts carry on this noise of hoses on their much higher and sharper key. The noise of the locust is dry, and it seems not to be rasped or vibrated but urged from him as if through a small orifice by a breath that can never give out. Also there is never one locust but an illusion of at least a thousand. The noise of each locust is pitched in some classic locust range out of which none of them varies more than two full tones: and yet you seem to hear each locust discrete from all the rest, and there is a long, slow, pulse in their noise, like the scarcely defined arch of a long and high set bridge. They are all around in every tree, so that the noise seems to come from nowhere and everywhere at once, from the whole shell heaven, shivering in your flesh and teasing your eardrums, the boldest of all the sounds of night. And yet it is habitual to summer nights, and is of the great order of noises, like the noises of the sea

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and of the blood her precocious grandchild, which you realize you are hearing only when you catch yourself listening. Meantime from low in the dark, just outside the swaying horizons of the hoses, conveying always grass in the damp of dew and its strong green-black smear of smell, the regular yet spaced noises of the crickets, each a sweet cold silver noise threenoted, like the slipping each time of three matched links of a small chain.

But the men by now, one by one, have silenced their hoses and drained and coiled them. Now only two, and now only one, is left, and you see only ghostlike shirt with the sleeve garters, and sober mystery of hi mild face like the lifted face of large cattle enquiring of your presence in a pitchdark pool of meadow; and now he too is gone; and it has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently and watching the street and the standing up into their sphere of possession of the trees, of birds hung havens, hangars. People go by; things go by. A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt: a loud auto: a quiet auto: people in pairs, not in a hurry, scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually, the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard and starched milk, the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in hueless amber. A street car raising its iron moan; stopping; belling and starting, stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past, the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks; the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell; rises again, still fainter; fainting, lifting, lifts, faints forgone: forgotten. Now is the night one blue dew.

Now is the night one blue dew, my father has drained, he has
coiled the hose.
Low on the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes.
Content, silver, like peeps of light, each cricket makes his comment
over and over in the drowned grass.
A cold toad thumpily flounders.
Within the edges of damp shadows of side yards are hovering children
nearly sick with joy of fear, who watch the unguarding of a
telephone pole.
Around white carbon corner lamps bugs of all sizes are lifted elliptic,
solar systems. Big hardshells bruise themselves, assailant: he is fallen
on his back, legs squiggling.
Parents on porches: rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories:
hang their ancient faces.
The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once
enchants my eardrums.

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On the rough wet grass of the back yard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there. First we were sitting up, then one of us lay down, and then we all lay down, on our stomachs, or on our sides, or on our backs, and they have kept on talking. They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine, quiet, with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night. May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father,. oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

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Marxism in Our Time

Victor Serge

1.

SINCE THE Communist Manifesto was published in 1848, Marxism has gone through many metamorphoses and suffered many attacks. Critics still exist—and sometimes men of good will—who insist that it has been cancelled, refuted, destroyed by history. The confused but energetic class-consciousness of the last defenders of capitalism, however, sees in Marxism its most dangerous spiritual and social enemy. The preventive counter-revolutions of Italy and of Germany justly proclaim themselves "anti-Marxist." On the other hand, almost all workers' movements which have won any appreciable power have been inspired by Marxism. The CNT of Spain is almost the only exception to this rule, and experience has shown only too well the seriousness of its ideological bankruptcy, at a moment when the consciousness of the masses was called on to become one of the decisive factors in a revolution in the making—a revolution perhaps aborted today precisely because of the political incapacity of the revolutionaries.

The historic achievements of Marxism are not to be denied. The Marxist parties of the Second International united and organized the pre-war working class, raising it to a new dignity, shaping it democratically. In 1914 they showed themselves prisoners of the capitalism which they fought even as they adapted themselves to it. (They adapted themselves, in reality, a good deal more than they fought.) But it was a Marxist party which, in the chaotic currents of the Russian revolution, knew how to disentangle the main lines of force, to orient itself constantly according to the highest interests of the workers, to make itself, in the truest sense of the word the midwife of a new world. Marxists bore the brunt of the class wars in the post-war period; Spartacists in Germany, Tiessriaki in Bulgaria, Communists everywhere. Later, at the moment of its highest flight, the Chinese revolution was strongly influenced by the revolutionary Marxism of the Russians—already much deformed, incidentally, by the reaction even then rising inside the U.S.S.R. It is true that German Marxism in its two forms—Social-Democratic and Communist—showed itself impotent before the Nazi offensive. Along with the degeneration of Bolshevism, this is without question, let us note in passing, the greatest defeat that Marxism has ever suffered. Nonetheless, Marxism continues to mount the ladder of world history. While irreconcilable oppositionists are persecuted and exterminated by Stalinism, the Austrian Socialists carry on a struggle, desperate but heroic, which saves them from demoralization; the Socialist miners of the Asturias in '34 deal a set-back to Spanish fascism.

It would be absurd to isolate Marxist thought from these social realities.

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Even more than it is a scientific doctrine, Marxism is an historic fact. If one is to understand it, one must embrace it in all its scope. One then perceives that since the birth, the apogee and the corruption of Christianity, there has been no more considerable event in the life of humanity.

2.

This fact goes far beyond the boundaries of the class struggle and becomes an integral part of the consciousness of modern man—no matter what his attitude towards Marxism. It is of secondary importance to ask one's self if the theories of value, or of surplus value, or of the accumulation of capital are still completely valid. An idle question, essentially, and even somewhat puerile. Science is never "finished"; rather, it is always completing itself. Can science be anything except a process of continual self-revision, an unceasing quest for a closer approach to truth? Can it get along without hypothesis and error—the "error" of tomorrow which is the "truth" (that is, the closest approximation to the truth) of yesterday. It is of minor importance, also, to point out that certain predictions of Marx and Engels have not been confirmed by history and that, on the contrary, many events have taken place which they did not at all foresee. Marx and Engels were too great, too intelligent, to believe themselves infallible and to play the prophet. It is true—but not important—that their followers have not always reached this level of wisdom. It still remains true that Marxism has modified the thinking of the man of our times. We are in debt to it for a renewing, a broadening of our consciousness. In what way? Since Marx, no one seriously denies the part played by economics in history. The relationship between economic, psychological, social and moral factors appears today, even to the adversaries of Marxism, in an altogether different light from that in which it appeared before Marx. It is the same with the role of the individual in history, and with the relationship of the individual to the masses and to society. Marxism, finally, gives us what I call "the historical sense"; it makes us conscious that we live in a world which is in process of changing; it enlightens us as to our possible function —and our limitations—in this continual struggle and creation; it teaches us to integrate ourselves, with all our will, all our talents, to bring about those historical processes that are, as the case may be, necessary, inevitable, or desirable. And it is thus that it allows us to confer on our isolated lives a high significance, by tying them, through a consciousness which heightens and enriches the spiritual life, to that life—collective, innumerable, and permanent—of which history is only the record.

This awakening of consciousness insists on action and, furthermore, on the unity of action and thought. Here is man reconciled with himself, whatever be the burden of his destiny. He no longer feels himself the plaything of blind and measureless forces. He looks with clear eyes on the worst tragedies, and even in the midst of the greatest defeats he feels himself enlarged by his ability to understand, his will to act and to resist, the indestructible feeling of being united in all his aspirations with the mass of humanity in its progress through time.

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3.

One is no more able to deny the part played by economics in history than the fact that the earth is round . . . And even those who argue the point do not in the least deceive themselves. I should like to emphasize here an important point to which not enough attention has been paid in the past. The enemies of the working class have themselves largely assimilated the lessons of Marxism. The politicians, the industrialists and bankers, the demagogues sometimes burn the works of Marx and throw his followers into prison; but, dealing with social realities, they pay tribute to Marxist economists and political leaders. And if scholars refute the theory of surplus value, their masters do not put any less energy and stubborness into the defense of the surplus value they appropriate as their plunder from the revenues of society. This *sub-rosa* Marxism of the enemies of socialism is in a fair way to become one of the most formidable means of defense of the privileged classes.

4.

Marxism undergoes, in its own history, the conditions of development which is analyzes. It is able to rise above them only in a small degree, since every gain of consciousness is an effect before it becomes a cause, and remains subordinate to pre-existing social conditions. "Social being determines consciousness."

The Marxism of the imperialist epoch was split. It was nationalistic and whole, reformist. Very few of its adherents—a Rosa Luxemburg, a Lenin, a Trotsky, a Hermann Gorter—saw beyond the moment to horizons vaster than those of capitalist prosperity. Either this Marxism dwelt on the heights of philosophy far removed from immediate action, or it was merely reminiscent of the ancient Christian utopianism (which was, in our culture, Hebrew before it was Christian: read the Prophets!).

The Marxism of the imperalist epoch was split. It was nationalistic and counterrevolutionary in the countries where it had been reformist; it was revolutionary and internationalist in Russia, the only country in which the foundering of an *ancien régime* forced the proletariat to carry out completely its historic mission.

The Marxism of the Russian revolution was at first ardently internationalist and libertarian (the doctrine of the Communist State, the federation of Soviets); but because of the state of siege, it soon became more and more authoritatarian and intolerant.[1]

The Marxism of the decadence of Bolshevism—that is to say, that of the bureaucratic caste which has evicted the working class from power—is totalitarian, despotic, amoral, and opportunist. It ends up in the strangest and most revolting negations of itself.

What does this mean except that social consciousness even in its highest forms does not escape the effect of the realities which it expresses, which it illuminates and which it tries to surmount.

1 As early as 1919, Bolshevism began to deny to all revolutionary dissenters the right to political existence.

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5.

Marxism is so firmly based in truth that it is able to find nourishment in its own defeats. We must distinguish here between the social philosophy —scientific, to speak more accurately—and its deductions for, and applications to, action. (These are actually inseparable, and this is the case not only with Marxism but also with all those intellectual disciplines which are closely tied to human activity.) It is our business neither to force events, nor to control them, nor even to foresee them—even though we are constantly doing all these things, with varying success; our activity, being creative, boldly ventures into the uncertain; and, what we do not know generally getting the better of what we know, our successes are rather astonishing victories. As to the Marxist line of action, it would be enough to list the prodigious success of the Bolshevik party in 1917 (Lenin-Trotsky), the predictions of Engels about the world war of the future and its consequences, some lines from the resolution adopted at the Basle Congress of the Second International (1913)—for the Marxist line to be justified as the most rigorously, scientifically thought-out of these times. But even when it comes to the very depths of defeat, it is still the same. Do you wish to understand your defeat? You will be able to only by means of the Marxist analysis of history. Marxism showed itself impotent in Germany before the Nazi counter-revolution; but it is the only theory that explains this victory of a party of the declassed, paid for and supported during an insoluble economic crisis, by the chiefs of the big bourgeoisie. This complex phase of the class struggle, prepared by the national humiliation at Versailles and by the massacres of proletarian revolutionists (Noske, 1918-1921), is made completely intelligible to us only by the scientific thought of the defeated class. And this is one of the reasons which make Marxist thought such a threat to the victors.

It is the same with the terrible degeneration of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R. There too, the punishment of the Old Bolsheviks, exterminated by the regime which they have created, is no more than a phenomenon of the class struggle. The proletariat, deposed from power by a caste of parvenues intrenched in the new State, can take an accounting of the basic reasons for its defeat and can prepare itself for the struggles of tomorrow only by means of the Marxist analysis.

6.

The Marxism of the era of capitalist prosperity naturally lacked revolutionary ardor. It dared neither imagine nor hope for the end of the society in which it lived. Lacking this audacity, it disavowed itself when it became necessary. But there are times when to live is to dare.

The Marxism of the first great revolutionary crisis of the modern world, chiefly represented by the Russians—that is to say, by men formed in the school of despotism—has given proof of a lack of boldness of another sort, and one quite as ruinous: it has not dared to take a libertarian position.

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Or rather, it was libertarian in words and only for a short time, during the brief period of Soviet democracy which extended from October, 1917, to the summer of 1918. Then it pulled itself together and resolutely entered on the path of the old "statism"—authoritatarian, and soon totalitarian. It lacked the sense of liberty.[2]

It is easy to explain—and even to justify—this development of Bolshevik Marxism by referring to the constant mortal danger, the Civil War, the superbly energetic defense of the public safety by Lenin, Trotsky, Dzerzhinsky. Easy and just to recognize that this policy, in its early stages, made certain the victory of the workers—and a victory won in the face of difficulties that were truly without precedent. But one must realize that *later on* this policy brought about the defeat of the workers by the bureaucracy. The Bolshevik leaders of the great years lacked neither knowledge nor intelligence nor energy. They lacked revolutionary audacity whenever it was necessary to seek (after 1918) the solution of their problems in the freedom of the masses and not in governmental constraint. They built systematically not the libertarian Communist State which they announced, but a State strong in the old sense of the word, strong in its police, in its censorship, its monopolies, its all-powerful bureaus. In this respect, the contrast is striking between the Bolshevist program of 1917 and the political structure created by Bolshevism in 1919.[3]

After victory had been won in the Civil War, the Socialist solution of the problems of the new society should have been sought in workers' democracy, the stimulation of initiative, freedom of thought, freedom for working-class groups—and not, as it was, in centralization of power, repression of heresies, the monolithic single-party system, the narrow orthodoxy of an official school of thought. The dominance and ideology of a single party should have preshadowed the dominance and ideology of a single leader. This extreme concentration of power, this dread of liberty and of ideological variations, this conditioning to absolute authority disarmed the masses and led to the strengthening of the bureaucracy. By the time Lenin and Trotsky realized the danger and wished to retrace their steps—timidly enough, at first: the greatest reach of boldness of the Left Opposition in the Bolshevik Party was to demand the restoration of inner-Party democracy, and it never dared dispute the theory of single-party government—by this time, it was too late.

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2 Let us pay tribute to Rosa Luxemburg who, as early as 1918, brought against the Bolsheviks this serious charge.

3 I have laid bare the underlying concepts and data in *Lenin*: 1917 and *The Year I of the Russian Revolution*. Nothing better typifies the mistakes of the Bolsheviks than such things as the plan for the regulation of the distribution of food written out, in minute detail, in Lenin's own hand; Trotsky's plan for the militarization of work; the economic schemes published by Bukharin on the eve of the NEP; the fatal stubbornness of the Central Committee, which persisted in following the policy of "War Communism" while the nation was plainly dying from it; and finally the suppression by the Communist Party of all other revolutionary workers' parties and groups.

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The fear of liberty, which is fear of the masses, marks almost the entire course of the Russian revolution. If it is possible to discover a major lesson, capable of revitalizing Marxism, more threatened today than ever by the collapse of Bolshevism, one might formulate it in these terms: Socialism is essentially democratic—the word, "democratic," being used here in its libertarian sense. One sees today in the U.S.S.R. that without liberty of thought, of speech, of criticism, of initiative, Socialist production can only go from one crisis to another. Liberty is as necessary to Socialism, the spirit of liberty is as necessary to Marxism as oxygen to living beings.[4]

7.

In the very wake of its sensational victory in the Russian revolution, Marxism is today threatened with a great loss of prestige, and in the working-class movement, with an unspeakable demoralization. It would be futile to pretend otherwise. We have seen, in the country of Socialist victory, the Marxist party—enjoying the greatest, the most deserved prestige—in the space of fifteen years undergo the most disconcerting degeneration. We have seen it reach the point of dishonoring and murdering its heroes of yesterday, drawing from their very loyalty, for the purposes of judical frame-ups based on glaring forgeries, confessions which are even more sinister than they are disconcerting. We have seen the dictatorship of the proletariat transform itself insensibly into a dictatorship of bureaucrats and of police agents over the proletariat. We have seen the working class, still in the flush of its recent victories, condemned to a moral and material level decidedly below that which it had under the Czarist regime.[5] We have seen the peasantry dispossessed and exiled by millions, agriculture ruined by forced collectivization. We have seen science, literature, thought literally handcuffed, and Marxism reduced to formulae which are frequently manipulated for political ends and emptied of all living content. We have seen it, furthermore, falsified, crudely adapted to the interests of a regime which in its *mores,* its actions, and the new forms of exploitation of labor it has superimposed on the base of common ownership of the instruments of production. We have seen, we still see the indescribable spectacle of the black terror, permanently established in the U.S.S.R. We have seen the cult of "the Beloved Leader," the corruption of the intellectuals and the workers organizations abroad, the systematic lies broadcast by a huge jour-

4 Note that Trotsky, in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), sets himself to demonstrate the necessity for workers' democracy to achieve the highest level of production, and that he for the first time here includes in the Soviet plan the restoration of workers' parties.

5 A very detailed analysis of all the official Soviet figures on salaries which was made by the economic bureau of Professor Pokovitch and was published in No. 138 of the *Bulletin* of this bureau (in Russian; Prague, November-December, 1937) permits us to conclude that the real wages of the Soviet workers are about 30 percent lower than they were before the Revolution. (Note that this refers to *real* wages.) This checks perfectly with the observations which I made on the spot over a period of years and which I set down in *Russia, Twenty Years After.* (Hillman-Curl, 1937, $2.50—Editors.)

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nalistic apparatus which still calls itself "Communist," the secret police of Moscow murdering or kidnapping its adversaries as far away as Spain and Switzerland. We have seen this gangrene spread throughout revolutionary Spain, compromising, perhaps irretrievably, the destiny of the workers. And it is not over yet. All the values which comprise the greatness of Socialism are from now on compromised, soiled, obliterated. A fatal division, between the blind and the clear-sighted, rascals and honest men, deepens in the ranks of the working class, already provoking fratricidal conflicts, rendering all moral progress impossible for the time being. For it is no longer possible to discuss with good faith and intellectual courage a single one of the theoretical and practical questions that grow out of Marxism. The social catastrophe in the U.S.S.R. taints in its growth, in its very life, the consciousness of modern man.

I wrote to André Gide in May 1936, before he left for Russia: "We make a common front against Fascism. But how can we bar its way with so many concentration camps behind our own lines? One's duty is no longer simple, and it is no longer permitted to any one to simplify it. No new orthodoxy, no sacred falsehoods can any longer dry up this running sore. . . . In one sense only does the Soviet Union remain the greatest hope of mankind in our day; in the sense that the Soviet workers have not yet said their last word."

Every social conflict is also a competition. If socialism is to win out over fascism, it must bring humanity social conditions which are clearly superior.

8.

Is it necessary to emphasize again that the confused, distorted and bloody Marxism of the gunmen of Moscow—is not Marxism? That it negates, belies and paralyzes itself? The masses, unfortunately, will take some time to realize this. They live not according to clear and rational thought but according to impressions which the lessons of experience slowly modify. Since all this goes on under the usurped banner of Marxism, we must expect that the masses, unable to apply Marxist analysis to this tragedy, will react against Marxism. Our enemies have it all their own way.

But scientific thought cannot regress below the Marxist level, nor can the working class do without this intellectual weapon. The European working class is still recuperating its strength, sapped by the blood-letting of the world war. A new proletariat is arising in Russia, its industrial base greatly extended. The class struggle goes on. For all the dictators' replastering, we hear the framework of the old social edifice cracking. Marxism will go through many vicissitudes of fortune, perhaps even eclipses. Its power, conditioned by the course of history, none the less appears to be inexhaustible. For its base is knowledge integrated with the necessity for revolution. (*Translated by Nancy and Dwight Mardonald.*)

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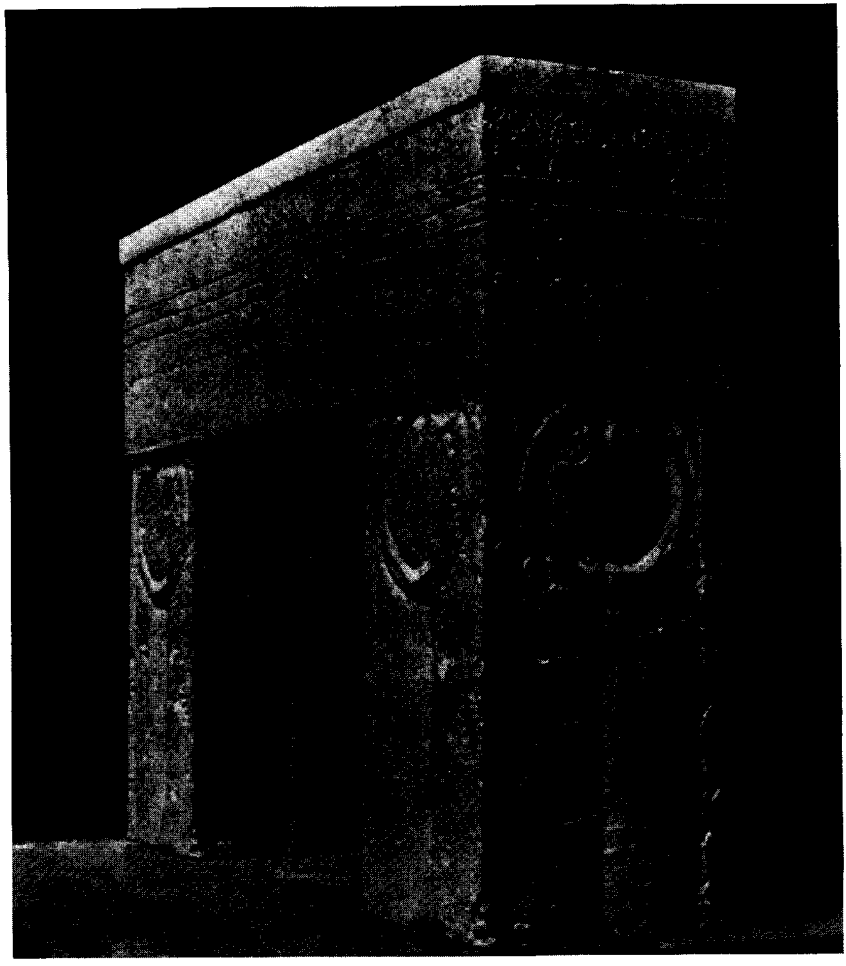

CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI; Arch at Targu-jiu
(photograph by C. Brancusi)

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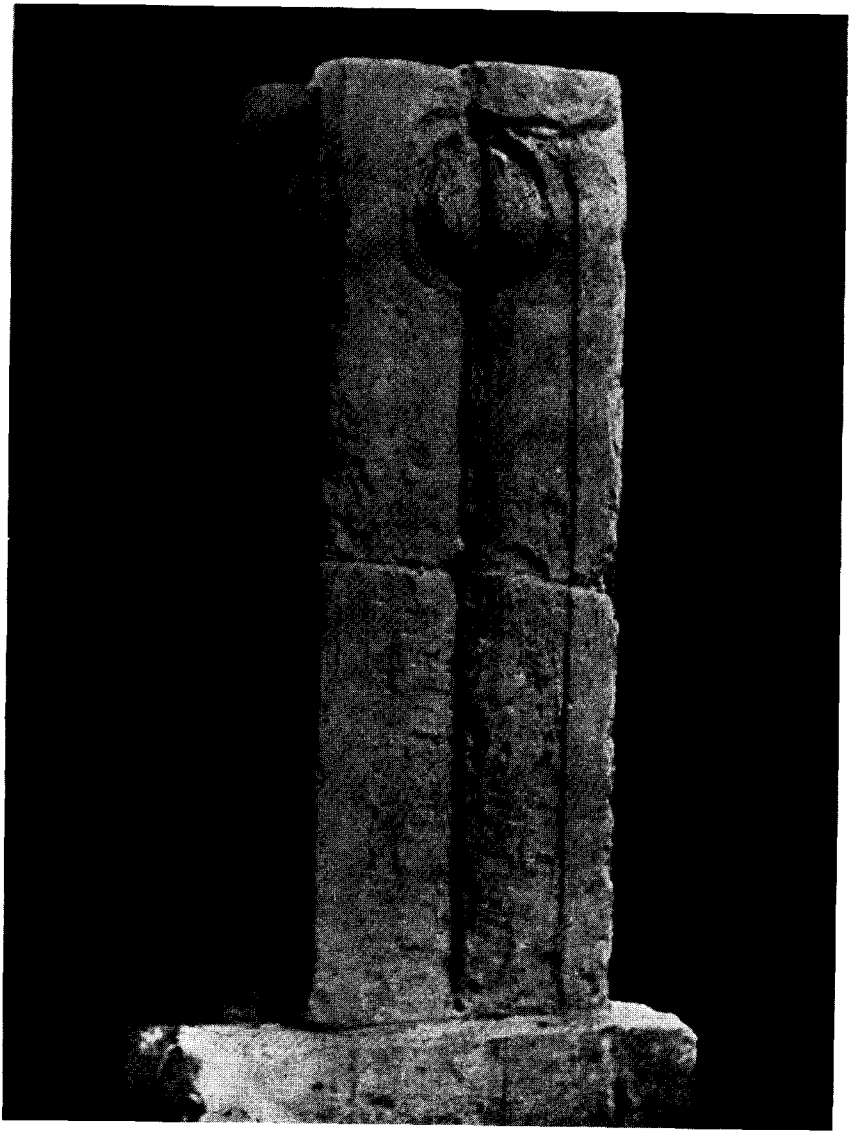

CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI; Column of Temple d'Amour
(photograph by C. Brancusi)

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Art Chronicle:

The Architectural Evolution of Brancusi

THE DEVELOPMENT of Brancusi's art has become so removed in certain years from the more publicized channels of contemporary expression that he has occasionally run into danger of being overlooked. This condition may be traced to the extreme refinement of the sculpture itself, and even more to a notable aloofness on the part of the sculptor. Brancusi has never associated with any of the famous individuals or groups which have altered the course of contemporary art. And, although he has worked in Paris for many years he has never bothered to hold an exhibition of his work there. In those years when abstract possibilities were being first explored, Brancusi had already established his accent, and since then he has swerved very little. Cubism, Dadaism, Constructivism, have passed him by, and such of their qualities as can be traced in his own work would seem to have taken root there independently.

Until last year, certainly, Brancusi had established none of the contacts by which the artist is conventionally bound to Society. He has never looked much farther than the direct development of his art, and this aim he has pursued with an exclusive tenacity. When he first decided upon sculpture as a career, he felt that it was time for him to leave Roumania (at that time a cultural Sahara) and not having the price of a ticket to Paris he is said to have walked there. And ever since, aside from occasional voyages, he has pursued his restricted creative program, cut off from political and aesthetic ferment, with an almost fanatical self-effacement. Even now, when his work is admired, he is quick to reply "Maintenant je commence."

It is surprising, therefore, to find that in the last few months the tenor of Brancusi's career has undergone an unexpected reversal. He is at the present moment engaged upon the most imposing official project yet offered to any of the more "advanced" modern artists. He is constructing a huge monument commissioned by the Roumanian government for the city of Targu-jiu, which will be formally opened in September by King Carol amid formidable military displays. And he has been further selected to design and construct a hall for the Roumanian pavilion at the New York World's Fair, while at the same time in India he is constructing his long-projected Temple d'Amour for a Hindu maharajah.

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The monument at Targu-jiu will stand as a fitting landmark for this stage of Brancusi's career. His works, probably more than those of any other sculptor since the Stone Ages, have been founded upon instinctive laws of architecture. They do not exist as architectural or decorative fragments but each one is given the life of a completely realized architectural entity. To Mondrian, among others, the works of Brancusi have always appeared disturbingly literary; yet, although most of his works bear titles and a few are even portraits, his subjects invariably fit behind the form completely, and exert little influence. His important sculptures are stripped and simplified with an intensity of concentration beyond even what the Constructivists have achieved, and are capable of enlargement to any size. When a vast public monument was commissioned Brancusi needed to look no farther than the countless motives that surrounded him in his studio. And for the actual fabrication in the Roumanian city park he stipulated that he should be provided with an army of peasants for assistants rather than skilled artisans or sculptors. For the study of past methods in large-scale construction he recently undertook a strenuous journey to India and Java.

The central feature of the monument will be one of the familiar Brancusi "columns without end," which in this case will almost live up to its name, being more than 300 feet in height. At present only one of the entrance archways has been freed of scaffolding, and will serve to afford an example of the style in its current synthesis. There is the largeness and unity of conception that characterizes monuments from prehistoric periods, which disintegrated after the early Egyptian pylons. There have certainly been no previous creations in our era that would hold their own among the menhirs of Carnac or the heads of Easter Island. No cultural cycle would seem stylistically to bound this massive ornamentation, yet there is a personal imprint along the contours that is supremely sensitive. It is certainly not the Twentieth Century that speaks here, as we have found it in the art of Gabo, Léger, or Le Corbusier. Hitler, who opened the Munich Art Congress with the announcement that "there is no place in the German Reich for the works of Neandertal Man" would doubtless be as hostile to the static timelessness of Brancusi as to the other art-forms so abhorrent to him, that herald a new order. Surely there is encouragement in the news that the government of Roumania should have deviated from its former axis sufficiently to make possible one of the great aesthetic monuments of our time.

GEORGE L. K. MORRIS

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The Soviet Cinema: 1930-1938

PART II

Dwight Macdonald

Stalin Invents Socialist Realism

As the Five-Year Plan approached its final year, the strain became intolerable. The industrial workers were on subsistence wages. Forced collectivization, jammed through under high pressure, was about to produce the terrible famine of 1932-3. The dictatorship of RAPP and the censorship were spreading a vast sterility throughout art and letters. Alarmed, the bureaucracy began to relax the pressure. In December of 1931, an official decree criticized ultra-leftist tendencies in the cinema. And on April 23, 1932, the Central Committee decreed (1) the liquidation of RAPP, (2) the formation in its stead of a broad united front organization to embrace "all writers supporting the platform of Soviet power and willing to take part in the work of Socialist construction." (3) A similar reorganization to be carried out in other branches of art."[32] The decree further stated that RAPP's ideology "has already become too narrow and is cramping the scope of serious artistic creativeness" and that RAPP "is in danger of becoming[!] an instrument for cultivating cliqueism . . . and for the alienation of important groups of writers and artists who sympathize with Socialism."[33] This was all very true, and had been equally true ever since Stalin in 1928 placed the dictatorial knout in RAPP's grasp.

The Stalin line, in politics or in esthetics, seems to have two unfailing characteristics: (1) when it changes, it does not merely shift direction; it reverses itself; (2) it always goes to extremes. It was not long, therefore, before a new dogma arose, a new revelation, to question which was heresy. This was partly a reaction against the old line: the 'fellow-travelers' whom RAPP had rapped, now rapped the RAPPists.† But it was more than that. It was a whole new esthetic, the very own creation of the Stalin clique. One story is that it was christened during an interview which a delegation of writers had with Stalin late in 1932. "The writers promised the 'Leader of the Peoples' not to make any formalistic experiments, but to hold on high the flag of realism. 'Say rather, of socialist realism,' said Stalin . . ."[35] It is difficult to discover precisely what he meant. The official definitions are: "critical assimilation of the art of past centuries" and "a culture that is

† The process had Stalin's blessing, of course. Stalin's classic tactic is to use one tendency to destroy another, and then to behead his executioner. Thus he used the Kino-Eye group to weaken the prestige of the Eisenstein-Pudovkin school and to line up the cinema 100 percent behind the Five Year Plan Then, when the plan was finished and the great directors well bridled, Stalin threw his tools on the scrap heap. Vertov, Shub, Kaufman and the other Kino-Eye adherents have long since been cast into outer darkness as 'formalistic.'[34]

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national in form and socialist in content."[36] The *Literaturny Kritik* is equally vague: "The basis of such realism consists without any doubt in the recognition that art worthy of the name serves life and helps human beings who are constructing life to understand more clearly its ends, its possibilities and its vices."[37] Such definitions mean everything and nothing. But it is beside the point to analyze socialist realism as though it were a serious esthetic philosophy. Socialist realism is nothing more complicated than Stalinist politics applied to art. In architecture, it means classical colonnades; in literature, the banal historical novels of an Alexis Tolstoy; in music, the 'tuneful' marching songs of Dzerzhinsky; in painting, the realistic French school of the last century, whose influence, outside the U.S.S.R., is today traceable chiefly in bar-room art. In the cinema, it means, in one word, Hollywood.

Socialist realism has, of course, its dialectical antithesis—Satanic, compounded of all evil—in the shape of 'formalism,' or sometimes, more frankly, 'leftism.' Roughly speaking, 'formalism' is what is known in more civilized societies as 'experimental' or even simply 'modern' art. The amount of energy and newsprint Soviet journalists have wasted in medieval debates as to what is and what is not 'formalistic,' is appalling. Stalin, who leaves theological hairsplitting to his underlings, bluntly cut to the heart of the matter when he admonished Shostakovitch to abandon his discordant modern technique in favor of melodies the toiling masses could whistle on their way to work. In a totalitarian state, art functions as an opiate, not a stimulant—or irritant. Leftism in art and leftism in politics are uncomfortably close relations. Socialist realism is the doctrine of a reactionary ruling class which must at all costs keep its artists and their mass audience safely under control.

This doctrine is by no means concerned only with technique. It also has something to say about theme and content, and here its significance is even more nakedly political. Stalin found an ultra-leftist cultural line a great help in stimulating and disciplining the masses for the tremendous collective effort of the first Five-Year Plan. When the steel mills had been built, the hydroelectric stations finished, the farms collectivized, a class society began to arise on this higher productive level. Stalin strengthened the control of his faithful bureaucracy over the productive plant the masses had built up between 1928 and 1933. To justify this betrayal of Socialism, it was necessary to claim that Socialism had already been achieved, so that it was right and fitting that the individual should begin to enjoy himself. "Life has improved, comrades," Stalin beamingly told the first All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites. "Life has become more joyous!" Joyous for whom? the non-Stakhanovite masses might well ask.

Stakhanovism, the Popular Front, socialist realism—these are expressions of the transition from collectivism to individualism which is taking

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place in the Soviet Union. The individual, not the masses, say the socialist realists, is the proper theme for Soviet art. This may mean the Great Leader —as Tolstoy's *Peter I,* obviously designed to suggest certain present-day parallels, which has been disseminated as a novel, a play, and an elaborate two-part movie. Or it may mean a rather sentimental emphasis on the petty joys and sorrows—always letting it be well understood that they *are* petty—of some individual member of the masses. To quote Sergei Vasiliev, co-director of *Chapayev*: "The new idea is to focus attention on the individual as a facet of the mass instead of developing the meaning of the film through mass movement. . . And to reveal the complete fusion of the human being with the mass does not mean that the individual has to disappear into the mass. The crowd is composed of human beings and this must be presented by every form of art."[37-a]

The glorification of the masses, the expression of collective, socialist ideals—these tasks are no longer held to be 'necessary' in Soviet art. A recent interview with a cinema executive gives a glimpse of the official 'line,; " 'How about propaganda?' I asked. 'Conscious agitational propaganda for communism or socialism is out,' came the answer. 'There has been little or none of it in the last two years. It was bad art, for one thing and besides, the Russian people don't need it any more. They are thoroughly sold on this new economic and social order."[38]

The great directors throve little better under socialist realism than they had under RAPPism. Political censorship was relaxed in 1933 and 1934, but the new crusade against 'formalism' began to gather headway. Dovzhenko's *Ivan* (1932) tried to show the adjustment of an individual worker to the Five-Year Plan, but the only memorable sections are those showing the Dneiper River and the construction of the great dam—passages of poetical description, with only an incidental bearing on the theme. Kozintsev and Trauberg made *The Youth of Maxim* (1934), skillful enough and even moving, but a conventional talkie, with musical accompaniment. Eisenstein produced nothing at all. Pudovkin again attempted an experimental use of sound, but his *Deserter* (1933), while more successful than *Life is Beautiful,* was on the whole a failure. It took him two years to finish it. In the discreet words of Paul Rotha: "Political events developed more rapidly than the film, and to save it from being out of date in its ideology [!], the scenario was changed during editing and whole sequences were suppressed. Technically, Pudovkin became absorbed in his complex montage methods and made several experiments with sound, but the social content of his theme escaped him."[39] In plainer language, Pudovkin had completed filming *Deserter* before the invention of socialism realism, and tried to patch it up in the cutting room to conform to the new dogma. The result was the usual one: he merely injured the film esthetically, without making it acceptable politically. His theme remained

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a mass-revolutionary one, and he was unable to resist experiments with sound. Hence he was guilty, after April 23, 1932, of two heresies: 'Leftism' and 'Formalism.' *Deserter* had to be taken off the screens of Moscow's two biggest movie theatres after eight days playing to half-filled houses. The press criticised it for dealing too much with politics![40]

'The Stalin School'

Early in 1933 Ralph Bond called attention to the rise of a new school of Soviet cinema, 'The Stalin School.' "Stalin," he explained somewhat vaguely, 'insisted on the creation of real people in Soviet art, and the directors have successfully followed this advice."[41] As the better-known directors failed to adjust themselves to the demands of the bureaucracy, the members of the Stalin School began to push them aside. These newcomers had certain things in common. They were without exception talents of the second rank. Most of them had been making movies for many years, without much success. Now that the elder gods were losing their prestige, there was room on Olympus for these small fry.

The founders of the Stalin School were F. M. Ermler and S. Yutkevitch. Both have long and, until the rise of Stalin, rather undistinguished careers in the cinema. Yutkevitch was one of the founders of FEKS. Throughout the twenties he made routine documentary and educational films. In 1931 he produced an early talkie, *The Golden Mountains,* a tedious affair with long stretches of slow dialogue, whose chief virtue was its imitation of Pudovkin. But since it had an individual theme, it was, correctly enough, hailed by Professor Yesuitov, the Kremlin's voice on cinema esthetics, as "a picture of great ideological significance." The *Soviet Culture Bulletin* added: "Its greatness lies in its profound and earnest social thematics."[42] Ermler made a number of obscure films in the twenties. His one success was *Fragment of an Empire,* significant because it centers about an individual, and because it casts a professional actor—Nikitin—in the leading role.

In 1932 Ermler and Yutkevitch collaborated on *Counterplan.* This was the show piece of the celebration that fall of the fifteenth anniversary of the Revolution, as *October* had been the feature of the tenth and *Lenin in October* was to be the show piece of the twentieth anniversary festival. (The progressive deterioration of the Soviet cinema may be roughly gauged by comparing these three films.) *Counterplan* took its text from one of Stalin's gnomic sayings, "The realization of our Plan depends on us, on living men."[43] The powers on high spared no effort or expense with the film: it was to show the world, and particularly the other Soviet directors, just what Stalin wanted in the cinema. Ermler studied at the Communist Academy for two years to prepare himself for his great task. Shostakovitch wrote the musical score. The theme was the foiling of an attempt at sabotage in a steel plant, obviously of the utmost political significance. But

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leaving aside politics, ideology, and social thematics, *Counterplan* was dull, uninspired, a stage play acted out before the camera by professional 'character actors.' Its quality is suggested in this description from the *Soviet Culture Bulletin* (No. 10, 1932): "It freely combines elements of healthy romance with joyous comedy, dramatic intensity with lyric warmth . . . unimpeachable pictures of Leningrad's white nights. . . . Special mention should be made of the work of the painter-architect Dubrovsky-Eshke, who built within the studio a giant department of a metal factory with all of its machines and lathes." Eisenstein deserts the theatre for the cinema the better to capture the reality of a factory; Ermler-Yutketvitch bring the cinema back to the theatre by building a stage factory inside the studio. Such considerations, of course, didn't bother the bureaucracy. *"Counterplan,"* writes Prof. Yesuitov, "was the first victory of socialist realism in the Soviet cinema."[44] And that is that.

If Ermler and Yutkevitch were the founders of the Stalin School, the Vassiliev brothers have been its heroes since the appearance of their *Chapayev.* They have been working in the movies since 1924, but, up to *Chapayev,* had produced nothing of note. Today, as the producers of the greatest success in the social-realist cinema, they are at the top. The other leading figures in the Stalin School may be briefly defined. Professor Yesuitov recently listed as "new men"—in the sense of gaining eminence recently—the following: Petrov, Macheret, Ekk, Barnet, Kavalleridze, Roshal, Raisman. The list may be accepted as definitive. Petrov made children's films until 1934, when he released *The Storm,* a tediously theatrical version of a literary classic. His latest film is *Peter I,* of which more later. Macharet in 1932 produced *Men & Jobs,* a variant of *Counterplan.* Ekk worked in Meyerhold's theatre, and was graduated from the State Cinematographic School in 1928. After the Success of *Road to Life,* he was assigned to make the first all-talking, all-color Soviet film—a sentimental little tale with revolutionary trimmings called *The Nightingale.* (One can imagine Shumiatsky's excitement: Sound! Color! Ekk! It's colossal!) The film was planned as the first of a trilogy, but it turned out so badly that the idea, and apparently Ekk as well, was dropped. Barnet worked with Kuleshov before 1925, and has made a number of films, with only one of which I am familiar: *The Girl with a Bandbox,* a comedy as forced and painful as most Soviet comedies. Kavalleridze is a Ukrainian like Dovzhenko; his *Prometheus* was recently banned by the authorities. Roshal has been working in the cinema since 1925. His best-known productions are *Seeds of Freedom,* a rather crude silent film, *St. Petersburg Nights* (1933), and *People of the Eleventh Legion (Paris Commune),* of which more later. Raisman made an excellent silent film, *Katorga (In Old Siberia).* I am unable to find any recent information about his work.

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Doldrums

Despite the best efforts of the Stalin School and their allies, the bureaucrats of Soyuzkino, the cinema perversely refused to thrive. Early in 1931 Vladimir A. Sutyrin, the youthful production chief of Soyuzkino, delivered a report to a conference of art workers. The cinema, he said, was in a "critical" situation; quantity and quality were both low. He suggested the remedies one might expect: bigger investments, more studios, rationalization, and "the formation of new cadres." The cinema was faced with "mounting difficulties," "its reputation abroad is at stake," he said, concluding with an urgent appeal for the "mobilzation of all the resources and all the energies of the nation" to save the industry from collapse.[45] Shumiatsky was more sanguine. In fact, the worse the situation became, the bigger he talked. In the summer of 1931, when the cinema was almost at a standstill between the censorship, the bureaucracy, and the problems of sound, Shumiatsky announced that Soyuzkino planned to make 500 full-length films in 1932, 80 of them in sound and 20 in color.[46] Two months later he was talking even more wildly: "By the end of 1932, we shall need 75,000 projection machine operators. . . . We have today only three theatres in the whole Soviet Union equipped to show sound pictures. By the end of this year we shall have 100. Next year there will be 5,000"[47] But by the end of 1932 only 25,000 operators were needed, and there were 36 and not 5,000 sound theatres.[48] Lenin had a word for it: *komchvanstvo*—"Communist swagger."

Early in 1933, as the cinema continued to lag far behind its 'norms,' Shumiatsky announced a "complete reorganization" of Soyuzkino, which was put under the "immediate direction" of the Council of People's Commissars. But in spite of everything, when the All-Union Conference for the 1934 thematic plan of the cinema met in the fall of 1933, Shumiatsky had to admit that only 15 feature films were scheduled for release in 1934, and that during the last five years "at least half the films were bad. He also complained about the scarcity of directorial talent, putting the number of first-rate directors" at 50 or 60, surely a generous estimate. Yet when the Conference closed, neither Eisenstein nor Pudovkin had been assigned a theme. "I am now working on the script for *Moscow,*" said Eisenstein. "I want very much to produce this during 1934, but the question does not depend solely on me." And when Pudovkin was asked what he was going to do in 1934, he answered, "As yet I don't know, but I'm beginning work with Vladimir Kirshon on *Aviation.*" (Nothing came of either of these projects.) But Alexandrov, Eisenstein's assistant, who had found he could make slapstick comedies which pleased the bureaucracy if not the esthetes, was in no doubt as to *his* plans. "I'm finishing *Jazz Comedy,*" he replied briskly. "I shall deliver it in March. After that, I am writing

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with Kataev a comedy about a collective farm—*Odarka* or *Four Bridegrooms.*"[49]

By 1934 the sterility of the cinema was beginning to cause alarm even in official circles. The movie critic of the *Moscow News* wrote that the past year and a half "has been, not to mince words, perhaps the most arid period in the history of the Soviet film."[50] *Izvestia* surveyed the recent films and found them dull, inartistic, and overburdened with propaganda.[51] Dinamov, editor of *International Literature* and most official of official critics, wrote in a review of progress on the 'art front': "Unfortunately, the cinema is greatly lagging behind the general program of Soviet art."[52]

The Red Commander to the Rescue!

But help was on the way. At the end of 1934, a film was released which was excellent alike as propaganda and entertainment: the fast-moving adventure story of Chapayev, the Red Commander. It had all the virtues—and no virtues beyond them—of the Hollywood 'Western,' with the White Guards cast as the cattle rustlers and the Red Partisans as the sheriff's posse. It was a hit at once. "Exceptionally interesting . . . a remarkable film," pronounced Marshal Voroshilov. "A new victory for Soviet art!" exclaimed Marshal Budyonny. The critics hastened to agree with these authorities, and, more important, so did the masses. *Chapayev* scored the greatest box office success the Soviet Union has ever known, eclipsing even *Potemkin.* There was nothing accidental about this success. The bureaucracy lavished time and money on this supreme effort. The Vassilievs spent two and a half years on *Chapayev*—more than twice as long as Eisenstein had spent on *Potemkin* and *October* combined. The effort seems to have exhausted both the Vassilievs and the bureaucracy.

Ivor Montagu sees in *Chapayev* a sign of "an expanding delight in individualism and personalization in all art fields of the Soviet Union corresponding to the flowering of the individuality consequent on the raising of the level of living accompanying the second Five-Year Plan. . . . No picture so simple, so innocent of a desire to prove points, or even of a feeling that they needed proving—in fact, so box-office could possibly have been produced anywhere but in a society that had long lost its doubts about itself."[53] One can agree with this analysis, merely raising two questions: (1) whose individuality is flowering? (2) is it a question of doubts being lost—or not permitted?

With *Chapayev,* socialist realism consolidated once for all—until the next reversal of the Stalin line, at least—its victory in the cinema. "The Vassilievs," wrote Prof. Yesuitov, "made a new synthesis of the creative aspirations of the Soviet cinematographic masters. This . . . has laid the foundation for a new epoch in the Soviet Cinema."[54]

On January 11, 1935, Kalinin, as chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R., announced a long list of awards in celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Soviet cinema. The Order of Lenin,

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the highest award, was bestowed on eleven people, including Shumiatsky, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, Kozintsev, L. Trauberg, Ermler, and the Vassilievs. The Order of the Red Star, two degrees lower, was given to Vertov. Eisenstein had to content himself with the title of 'Honored Art Worker.' It was clear which way the tide was setting.

The 1935 Conference

In March, 1935, a 'Film Festival' was held in Moscow to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Soviet cinema. Its chief purpose was to stimulate sales of Soviet films abroad, which had fallen off since the advent of socialist realism. There was little in the festival to interest the cineast. "Most of the festival visitors from abroad," reported the *New York Times,* "were business emissaries." Hollywood sent three current masterpieces: *Gentlemen Are Born, Our Daily Bread,* and *Cleopatra.* These were duly awarded various degrees of honorable mention by a jury composed of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko and—Shumiatsky. First Prize went to the Leningrad studio "for its affirmation of the realist style of Soviet cinematography". After the festival—or wake—was over, Ermler and Shumiatsky led a delegation of film officials to Hollywood, where they spent six weeks learning how to make movies 'in the American style'. [56]

The festival itself was of slight importance compared to the closed conference which preceded it. Attended by the leading Soviet directors, cameramen, actors, scenarists, and film executives, this conference marked the final triumph of socialist realism in the cinema. It was held against a background of five years of sterility and failure. Morale was low, nerves were frayed, tempers short. Since it was out of the question to discuss frankly the political root of the trouble, scapegoats had to be found. As is the custom in the Russia of Stalin, the victims of his political line were made the whipping-boys for its ruinous effects. Just as Soviet engineers are punished when the bureaucracy's high-pressure methods and impossible production quotas cause break-downs in industry, so Eisenstein and Pudovkin were publicly humiliated because their work had been sabotaged by the bureaucracy and its policies. The current success of *Chapayev* gave all the sharper edge to the attack. The 1935 conference was the turning point in the recent history of the Soviet cinema. Here the great directors formally disavowed their basic theories, here the parvenues of the 'Stalin School' openly assumed complete power, and here the future course of the cinema was fixed once for all—until the next major twist of the Kremlin's line.

A sympathetic observer gives us some interesting glimpses of this conference. Writing in *Cinema Quarterly* (Spring and Summer numbers, 1935), Marie Seton reported: "For four years there has been a crisis among the cinema artists . . . They failed time and again to find and reveal the spirit

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of the time before that spirit had evolved into something different. [That is, they were unable to keep up with the rapid shifts in the Party line.] . . . For three days [at the conference] criticism raged fast and furious . . . There was a deal of backbiting, particularly on the part of the second generation of directors, who often showed themselves intolerant, arrogant, and ungrateful toward the pioneers . . . Several young directors of talent unlit by genius began to belittle Eisenstein and Pudovkin with personally rude quotations from Gogol and George Sand."

"I don't think that the Soviet cinema is only made up of heroes like Eisenstein and Dovzhenko," said Yutkevitch, declaring he spoke "for the great army of cinema workers." He also said that he liked American films "because they appeal to a great public, for, in the best meaning of the word, the cinema is a popular art." In conclusion, he made a "friendly criticism" of Eisenstein, "spoken as a practical man", for theorizing too much and producing too little. (As a practical man, Yutkevitch should have realized that it was possible for Eisenstein to theorize about socialist realism but not to create under it.) Turning to Eisenstein, he said, "You are richer than all of us, but you are sitting on your own gold." Seton notes: "Eisenstein merely smiled."

Trauberg also called on his old master to stop theorizing and get down to work. He criticised *October* for the "stupid poetry" of its palaces and statues, and *The End of St. Petersburg* for its hero's colorless personality. The truth is that Trauberg felt none too secure himself against the serious charge of 'formalism'. Although he and Kozintsev had renounced the stylized technique of *The New Babylon* in favor of the most orthodox socialist realist approach—as in the Maxim films, untainted alike by formalism and esthetic interest—he considered it necessary to make a specific declaration: "He felt they had rid themselves of formalism, and thought the method of setting the individual against the social background of the period quite satisfactory."

The attack on the older generation went to such lengths as to alarm even the stage managers of the conference. At that time, the Kremlin's liason officer in the cinema was Sergei Dinamov, then the editor of *International Literature.* Dinamov is—or rather was, since he has been deposed from his editorship and is now reported to be in jail—an energetic, humorless, zealous young literary functionary who had made his reputation as editor of the RAPP organ, *At Your Post.* It was his job to see that Good triumphed over Evil, but also that the mechanics of the victory were not too crudely exposed. He therefore felt it necessary to rebuke the over-zealous partisans of socialist realism and to dole out a certain amount of diplomatic praise to the older generation—making it clear, of course, that they had much to learn, as well as unlearn. He also had to give 'ideological directives' to the assembled

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cinema workers. This he did in a remarkable 'keynote' speech which issued to the cinema its marching orders for the future.

His main points may be summarized:

(1) Beauty is to be reinstated. (But it must be "true" and not "false" beauty.)

(2) The cinema must be "optimistic". (But beware of "an illusory optimism that rocks people to sleep".)

(3) "One of the chief elements in Soviet film style is its true reflection of life."

(4) There must be more emotion. ("Without love and hatred there can be no art . . . One cannot separate thought from passion . . . What is wrong with Eisenstein's theory is that he separates thought from feeling.")

(5) There must be more heroes. ("I once gave an address at the Academy of Aviation. One of the commandants asked me a question: 'When will our artists show us the best people of the country?' I answered: 'When the artists themselves are the best people of the country.'")

(6) The individual must replace the mass as hero. ("Learn from Shakespeare, in whose works the epoch becomes a man, the events of an epoch the acts of a man.")

(7) There must be more Passion. ("One must not be afraid of being passionate, for, after all, true Party art is truly passionate art." Dinamov evidently uses the word in a strictly non-Hollywoodian sense.)

(8) The film must be built around the professional actor. ("The film without a hero was only an experiment. We need actors with great passions. Without actors we can do nothing. We cannot base our cinema on typage.")*

(9) It is imporant that themes be treated correctly. Under this heading, Dinamov outlined four "main points": (a) "The first is when it presents live people." (b) "The second point is that one must be a scholar and research worker." (c) "The third point is that one must have real ideas—political and artistic courage . . . In this connection, I should like to give *The Youth of Maxim* as an example. This film deals with the history of the Party. Taking this tremendous subject, the directors were running a certain risk, for it was an exceptionally responsible task. The birth of a Bolshevik is a subject in which political errors are unforgivable." (d) "The fourth point is that one must limit one's subject in order to deepen it."

(10) "The important thing now is to think about the style of the Soviet cinema." [57]

This sort of first-grade didacticism, expressed in terms so vague as to mean literally nothing, distinguishes the estheticians of the Kremlin. Unable even to mention the real political aims of socialist realism, they must speak in generalities which are not even glittering. It is hard to conceive the limitless impertinence of delivering such a harangue to an audience which included the most sophisticated masters of cinema of our time. But whatever these masters may have thought about Dinamov's twaddle, out-

* 'Typage' means the use of non-professional actors chosen for their symbolic value as mass types, as the sailors in *Potemkin*, the milkmaid heroine of *The General Line*.

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wardly they voiced complete agreement, even enthusiasm. At this conference, the same phenomenon could be observed which later was to mystify the world in the Moscow trials. The victims compete with the prosecutor in denouncing themselves, in repudiating the ideas and actions of their entire careers, and in paying servile homage to the very forces which are destroying them. The litany is by now all too familiar:

Dinamov: "The theory of a film without a plot is a very dangerous thing."

Eisenstein: "The intellectual cinema . . . is too vulgar to consider. *The General Line* was an intellectual film."

Dinamov: "The film without a hero was only an experiment."

Pudovkin: "In *Chapayev* we see how a real class character is made."

Dovzhenko:"*Chapayev* is tied up with the future of the cinema."

Eisenstein: "*Chapayev* is the answer to the very deep solving of Party problems in art."

Dinamov: "The voice of the hero must be the voice of the epoch, and the voice of the epoch must be the voice of the hero." [58]

The Cultural Thermidor

Three months before the 1935 cinema conference, on December 1, 1934, a young Communist named Nikolaiev assassinated Sergei Kirov, one of Stalin's chief lieutenants. "Nikolaiev's shot," we read in *The Letter of an Old Bolshevik*, "proved to be fatal not only to Kirov but also to the country as a whole and to the Communist Party." [59] In the three and a half years since Kirov's assassination, the Stalin regime has carried its Thermidorean reaction to almost incredible extremes. The recent laws making divorce and abortion difficult for the common people, the establishing of the death penalty for theft of State property, the restoration of uniforms for schoolboys and of Czarist military discipline and rankings in the army, the speed-up and enormous wage differentials of Stakhanovism, the annihilation, political or physical, of almost all the Old Bolshevik leaders—such symptoms of Thermidor have appeared throughout Soviet society.

In the cultural field, the screws were first applied with vigor on January 28, 1936, when *Pravda* launched its celebrated attack on the composer Shostakovitch. Since the liquidation of RAPP in 1932, Soviet arts and letters had enjoyed a period of comparative calm, freedom and tolerance—"a general critical amnesty," in the words of Joshua Kunitz.[60] Webster defines 'amnesty' as "the act of a sovereign power, granting oblivion, or a general pardon, for a past offense"—and, indeed, oblivion is the most welcome gift the bureaucracy could make to any Soviet artist. Now this 'general pardon' to artists for being artists was withdrawn, and they were all once more forced

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to work in the full glare of the political spotlights. Esthetics again became the province of the censor and the police agent.

Pravda violently abused Shostakovitch's music as "un-Soviet, unwholesome, cheap, eccentric, tuneless, and leftist" and advised him to emulate Glinka and write tunes that could be whistled.[61] The attack was entirely unexpected—Shostakovitch for several years had been considered, inside as well as outside the Soviet Union, its greatest living composer—and evidently planned quite deliberately as the opening gun in a new offensive along the entire artistic front. At once a hurricane onslaught on leftism and formalism burst out in the press. *Pravda* denounced modern architecture as "monstrous trick architecture" [62] *Komsomolskaya Pravda* described Joyce's *Ulysses,* then running serially in another Soviet magazine, as "written in English that can hardly be understood by Englishmen . . .Its style reminds one of the delirious babblings of a mad philosopher who has mixed all the known languages into one monstrous mess." [63] Et cetera, et cetera.

Since 1936, in every cultural field, the socialist-realist line has been enforced more ruthlessly than the RAPP line ever was. Besides Shostakovitch, the victims have included Eisenstein and Vertov in the cinema, Tairov and Meyerhold in the theatre, even such harmless figures as Natalie Satz, creator and director of the well-know Moscow Children's Theatre. Pashukanis, for many years the all-powerful arbiter of Soviet legal theory, has been dethroned as "a counter-revolutionary and class enemy."* Pokrovsky, whose history of Russia Lenin recommended as a textbook, who in 1930 was described by the *Soviet Encyclopedia* as "the greatest Marxist historian not only in the USSR but also in the world", whose funeral in 1932 was attended by Stalin—Pokrovsky has now been posthumously purged, his work stamped 'heresy', and his disciples described by *Pravda* as "Japanese-German-Trotskyist agents of Rightist dissenters". His chief sins seem to be his "ultra" materialistic interpretation of history and his low estimate of such great national leaders as Peter the Great.[63] In literature, by its nature the most dangerous sector of all, the toll has reached massacre proportions: the poets Byedny and Pasternak, the dramatists Kirshon and Afinogeniev, the novelist Pilnyak, and dozens of lesser writers have been denounced for formalism and sometimes even arrested for the corresponding political heresy, Trotsky-

* Pashukanis was disgraced because he held that law is a product of the bourgeois state and that, consequently, as the state withers away under socialism, so will its legal structure. But the 1936 constitution, which declared in its first article that socialism had been achieved, in later articles set forth an elaborate code of laws which Pashukanis himself had drawn up. Thus either Stalin or Pashukanis was at fault as a theoretician. It turned out that it was the latter. The dangerous political tendency of Pashukanis' theory became clear when he predicted that at the end of the second five year plan, in 1937, the withering away of the state would reach "a decisive stage." But when 1937 arrived, the state was obviously blooming more lustily than ever. Stalin had scored another theoretical victory over Pashukanis, who had failed to heed the Beloved Leader's words at the Sixteenth Party Congress: "Any dialectical thinker must understand that to eventually wither away, the state must first grow stronger."[62]

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ism.[64] In the cinema, the hunt was led by Shumiatsky himself. Calling together the directors and scenario writers a few months after the Shostakovitch affair, he warned them at length against formalism, which he defined as "an abnormal outgrowth of form in a work of art to the detriment of its content." On the strength of this innocuously academic definition, Shumiatsky scrapped "a great number" of already completed films and had those in progress closely inspected for traces of the dread pox. As a result, in 1936 only 28% as many films were produced as were called for in the plan.[65]

Twilight of the Gods

The 1935 conference shattered once for all the prestige, and probably the morale as well, of the three great masters of Soviet cinema. At the conference, Eisenstein announced that he was beginning work on a new film, *Bezhin Meadow,* which was to be his answer to the 'friendly critics' who urged him to implement theory with action. Two years later, the Central Administration of the cinema industry halted work on the film and, according to some reports, physically destroyed the almost completed negative.[66] In the final instalment of this article, I shall go into the details of 'the *Bezhin Meadow* affair'. Enough to note here that the film was suppressed for the usual reasons: formalism and political leftism. By the end of 1937, however, the bureaucratic whirligig had made another revolution and Shumiatsky, who had led the attack on *Bezhin Meadow,* was in disgrace. It was announced that Eisenstein "has won a chance to come back" and that he was going to make a historical movie about the struggle between the Novgorod warriors and the German Baltic knights in the thirteenth century.[67] This time the Kremlin is taking no chances. To preserve him from the temptations of formalism, Eisenstein is being 'assisted' by the reliable D. Vassiliev (who also assisted in making the politically and esthetically impeccable *Lenin in October*) and has been given for actors such stars as Okhlopov and Cherkassov. And to make political 'errors' impossible, he has been assigned a subject on which the views of the Kremlin are well known. This victory of the Novgorod nobles, led by Prince Alexander Nevsky, over their Teutonic competitors has been certified in recent history textbooks as the first victory of Democracy over Fascism. The official announcement of the film describes it as "dealing with the struggles of the Russian *people* [italics mine] against the German knights".[68] For the ideologues who have transformed Negrin and Azana into defenders of the Spanish masses, it is no doubt a simple enough trick to turn the Novgorod princes into the Russian people. "The Kremlin," comments the *N. Y. Herald-Tribune,* "has decided that patriotism, far from being a bourgeois monopoly, has its function even in the workers' fatherland. *Alexander Nevsky* is being filmed to make the workers concious of what they have to defend." [69] I suspect this is not its only function. The *Tribune* quotes an early chronicler on Nevsky's

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death: "The sun of the Russian land has set, my children . . . Grant, merciful Lord, that he may see thy face again in the age to come, for he has labored for Novgorod and for the whole Russian land." I venture to predict that Eisenstein's new film will provide another cinematic avatar for Stalin. First it was Peter the Great, now it is Alexander Nevsky. When may we expect a re-take of *Czar Ivan the Terrible?*

Pudovkin has been working for several years on *The Happiest,* a movie about the rivalry of two Soviet aviators in setting a round-the-world speed record. It is reported to have been released in the Soviet Union, but has not yet reached this country. This is perhaps just as well, judging from the account given by a British group which visited Russia last year: "We met Pudovkin in a cutting room in the Mosfilm studios, where he was editing a sequence of his second sound film, *The Happiest.* The moment of our meeting amused all of us, for Pudovkin was in the act of examining a strip of film which he had just had frame-cut for a speed effect. We chided him on indulging in the old tricks, and he apologized, saying that there was very little of this sort of thing in the new film, which has turned out to be a study of character revealed in dialogue and simple camera work—'no good for foreign audiences'." [70] Even Pudovkin, the only one to make a serious effort to do something with sound despite the Stalinist bureaucracy, even he seems to have given up the struggle.

Finally, there is Dovzhenko, who since 1930 has made four movies as against one apiece for Eisenstein and Pudovkin. Whether it is because his approach is emotional, instinctive, comparatively little guided by conscious theory, or whether it is because his films, unlike those of the cosmopolitan, internationally-minded Eisenstein and Pudovkin, are deeply rooted in the soil of his native Ukraine*—whatever the explanation, there is no question but that Dovzhenko has been able to adapt himself to the present regime better than either of his colleagues. Since 1935 he has completed one film: *Aerograd* (American title: *Frontier*). This has some very beautiful landscapes—he borrowed Eisenstein's cameraman, Tisse—and some experimental use of sound, or rather of silence. But as a whole it is destroyed by the contradiction between the crudity of its theme—a melodramatic conspiracy between Japanese agents and religious fanatics to sabotage the Soviet Far Eastern government—and the epic grandeur with which this infantile plot is presented. Old-fashioned intrigue, patriotic flag-waving—these are inadequate to sustain the impassioned rhetoric of Dovzhenko and are dwarfed to inanity against the grandiose scenic background supplied by Tisse. There are several extremely fine effects, as the ski journey across the Siberian snow

* His first film, *Zvenigora,* was so impregnated with Ukrainian folk lore as to be at times unintelligible to non-Ukrainians. *Arsenal, Soil,* and his current film, *Schorss,* are all definitely, at times mystically Ukrainian. Thus his work conforms to Stalin's well-known formula: "National in form, socialist in content."

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wastes, but the film as a whole seems mannered, overstrained, fragmentary. As in *Soil* and *Ivan,* Dovzhenko escapes from his political theme—which, perhaps, did not interest him very much—into pictorial lyricism. The leitmotif of the film is the question, repeated several times by the main character: "Is there anywhere in the world such beauty?" Eisenstein is said to have been disappointed by *Aerograd,* and to have remarked: "The building up of the film on the pretext of the danger to the Far East represented by the religious community is rather ridiculous."[71]

When Stalin in 1934 gave Dovzhenko the Order of Lenin, he 'suggested' to him that he make a film about Schorss, 'the Chapayev of the Ukraine.' "Dovzhenko was very keen about the idea and discussed it with the Ukrainian authorities," who were also 'very keen' about it. Soyuzkino built him a special studio after his own designs, and thousands of Red Army troops were put at his disposal.[72] *Schorss* was scheduled for release last fall, but has been delayed. Perhaps it was the lingering effects of the pneumonia Dovzhenko contracted while making *Aerograd* in Siberia. Or perhaps it was another kind of disease, endemic in the Russia of Stalin. "One had the impression," reported the English technicians who talked to him last year, "that Dovzhenko fully realized the basic difficulty of the task which the Soviet state has set its artists in requiring them to deviate neither to the right nor to the left in following the path toward the ideals of the State.[73]

The Cinema of Socialist Realism: 1935-1938

In the last three years the Stalin School has perfected its monopoly on Soviet film production. All the major pictures, except for *Aerograd,* have come out of its workshop. These films cannot be classified on any esthetic basis because all tendencies, from the expressionist melodrama of FEKS to Eisenstein's 'Intellectual Cinema,' have been swallowed up in the morass of socialist realism. As Eisenstein declared at the 1935 conference: "At the present stage, we craftsmen of the cinema have no difference of principles, no disputes about a whole series of program postulates such as we had in the past. There are, of course, individual shades of opinion within the comprehensive conception of the single style: socialist realism."[74] *Baltic Deputy* is a better film than *Paris Commune,* and *It Happened One Night* is better than *The Divorce of Lady X,* but all are in the same banal tradition of realistic stage drama.

Recent Soviet films, however, *can* be analyzed as to subject matter. There seem to be three major categories.

First, there are those on the classic Civil War or revolutionary themes. Almost all the more successful films are in this class: *Chapayev, The Last Night, Baltic Deputy, We Are from Kronstadt,* the Maxim series, etc. These owe their relative superiority partly to having a theme peculiarly well

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adapted to cinematic treatment, and partly to the fact that they are living off the crumbs of the great silent film tradition.

Next, there are those films made direct to the order of the Kremlin. In contrast to the generalized propaganda of the first type, these are directed towards some limited political end of immediate importance for the regime. They are likely to be heavy, lifeless, and timid; their creators are paralyzed by the awareness of the immense political significance of their work—and the penalties for failure. The nature of the sermon they preach—at best reactionary, as in *Peter I,* and often downright falsification, as in *Lenin in October*—also has a corrupting effect on them as works of art.

Finally, there is the most significant category of all, the one which has grown enormously in the last few years: films modelled frankly on Hollywood and quite deliberately innocent of political content. As the economic interests of the bureaucracy diverge more and more from those of the masses, it becomes increasingly necessary to change the cinema from a stimulant into an opiate, from an agitational-propagandist medium into an establishment for the manufacture of vicarious pleasures for the masses. The cinema of escape has become an administrative necessity in Russia. The adventure film, defunct since the pre-1925 period, was revived in the spring of 1935 with the release of Schneiderov's *Golden Lake,* and there is by now even a Soviet Rin Tin Tin.[75] The screening of literary classics has greatly increased in recent years. Stories by Maupassant, Gogol, Pushkin, Ostrovsky, Dostoevsky and others have been made into tediously theatrical movies. Last year it was reported that Soyuztorgkino might buy the screen rights to *Jane Eyre, The Mill on the Floss, Pride and Prejudice,* and *Pickwick Papers.*[76] The attention that has been given children, both as theme and as audience, is also significant. Totalitarian dictatorships have a peculiar interest in the younger generation. There is an All-Union Children's Film Trust, which in 1936 was scheduled to make 25 per cent of the movies produced that year. After the success of *Road to Life,* children were increasingly featured in movies. Even Eisenstein fell in with the trend: *Bezhin Meadow* had a ten-year old hero. Children played the main parts in *Beethoven Concerto, Young Pushkin, The Ballad of Cossack Golota,* and *Lonely White Sail*—to name a few recent films that come to mind.

But the great opiate is comedy. I must admit that I have never found Soviet movie comedies, even before 1930, especially comic, whether because this genre calls for an irresponsibility and lightness not to be found in the Russian Soul or whether because revolution and socialist construction can be expressed through wit or satire but not in the comic vein. I realize that authority is against me. "The achievements of the Soviet cinema in the field of comedy," writes Shumiatsky, "are dealing a blow of equal force both to the old banality of the film comedy and to the ludicrous pedantry which would like to deprive the Soviet cinema of the right to reflect our joys, our

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buoyancy, the robust youth of the land of the Soviets."[77] At the risk of being set down as a ludicrous pedant, I insist that Soviet comedies are lousy. And I suggest that the tone of Shumiatsky's statement is perhaps itself an indication of why they are. One does not successfully woo the comic muse with talk about "dealing a blow of equal force."

But Stalin has said, "Life is gayer, comrades!" And now that socialism has been achieved in Russia (see Article I of the Constitution), life *must* be gayer. The vogue of comedy dates from the beginning of the second five-year plan. In the fall of 1934, the State schools for training movie actors began to require of entrants a knowledge of singing and dancing. At the end of the year, the first all-slapstick comedy was released. That year G. V. Alexandrov, Eisenstein's collaborator on *Potemkin, October,* and *The General Line*, released his first musical comedy, *Jolly Fellows.* "The story is of a young shepherd who has unusual musical talent. He finds his way to the Big City and under the favorable conditions of Soviet life his talents come to fruition, and he develops into a great and popular artist [actually, a jazz band leader] . . . It has ingenious stunts, lavish scenes, and so many laughs that at one time the producing unit seriously considered the advisability of cutting down on the humor."[78] Those who have seen *Jolly Fellows* agree it was as painful as it sounds from this description, but, with a certain amount of plugging from the Kremlin, it was a popular success. Alexandrov has become the leading exponent of musical comedy in the Hollywood manner. He was recently entrusted with the important task of making a documentary to illustrate Stalin's report to the Eighth Congress of the Soviets. It is not stated whether his experience in making comedies got him the job.

Last year the Stalin School of comedy reached a new low. It produced the first Soviet football comedy, Timoshenko's *The Goalkeeper of the Republic.* This has been described as "a rollicking if by no means first-rate production, strongly reminiscent of American college comedies. . . It is interesting for its carefree comedy, love emphasis, rapid tempo throughout, and exciting situations verging more than once on the highly improbable . . . One of the most exciting moments of the picture occurs when the players arrive late at the stadium in a plane, bail out one after another, and descend to the field under fluttering white parachutes."[79] I still think Soviet comedies are lousy.

It is obviously not possible to comment in detail on even the most important Soviet films of the last three years, I have, however, selected four which, I think, may fairly be taken as representative. I have chosen *Paris Commune* to represent the historical-revolutionary type of film largely

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because it offers an interesting comparison with an important silent movie on the same subject. In the category of films with an immediate political tendency, I have selected *Peter I* and *Lenin in October,* and in the category of apolitical escapist films, *The Rich Bride.* These three films have been officially recognized as the cinema's greatest achievements. Those concerned in making them have been showered with awards and orders. The new chief of the cinema industry, Semyon Dukelsky, recently wrote of them: "These great victories were won as a result of constant attention to the Soviet cinema . . . on the part of the Party, the government and, personally, of Comrade Stalin."[80]

Paris Commune (Director: Gregory Roshal; Russian title: *People of the Eleventh Legion*). This picture was released on March 18, 1937, to celebrate the anniversary of the 1871 Commune. On the same date in 1929, Kovintsev and Trauberg released a film on the same theme: *The New Babylon.* These are both studio films, contriving their effects methodically out of plaster and Klieg lights and highly trained actors, as against Eisenstein's method, which is to lie in wait for reality, surprising the moment when the face of an unknown in the crowd gives him what he wants, seizing the one detail and camera angle out of many which forces a ship, a statue, a palace to yield up its precise meaning for that instant of film. But there is, just the same, a difference. Kozintsev-Trauberg—I am speaking of the creators of *New Babylon,* not the manufacturers of the Maxim films—accept the responsibilty imposed by their greater control over their material and press on to a new frontier which can be reached only by calculated, controlled artificiality. They carry the studio approach so far as to make it radical, experimental, positive—in short, an esthetic *principle* from which effects can be obtained that can be had no other way. Roshal's exploitation of the studio is as opportunistic as theirs is principled. If he works with studio sets and professional actors, it is for the same reason Hollywood does: because it is easier. His use of the studio is tame, banal, purely utilitarian, simply a crutch to help him to realism. *New Babylon* is stylized, *Paris Commune* merely artificial.

Politically, there is also a significant contrast. *New Babylon* is a revolutionary film. Its camera shuttles between the squalid misery of the masses and the vulgar luxury of their exploiters, weaving the two into a fabric of class conflict. *Paris Commune* is a Popular Front film. It contains no anti-capitalist propaganda, little sense of the existence of opposed classes. The bourgeoisie has dwindled to a pair of skulking, villainous factory owners, while the proletariat has been inflated into 'The People,' as represented by a few brave, noble and generous character actors and a mob of supers. These strictly non-political heroes are fighting for nothing more specific than 'democracy' and 'a better life.' One has the impression of the entire population of Paris, except for a few sneaking entrepreneurs, marching out to fight the proto-fascist troops of Thiers. *New Babylon* emphasized the class struggle inside Paris: the massacre of the Communards at the end is brutally portrayed. But the Second Republic which was founded on the corpses of the Communards is today the Popular Front ally of the Soviet Union. Roshal has therefore wisely limited himself to the parlia-

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mentary discussions among the Communards—which show the awful consequences of lack of 'unity'—and the military operations against the Versailles troops. His film ends just before the final massacre.

The most striking common quality of recent Soviet films is a weakness, if not an absence, of structure. One episode follows another in chronological order, and that is about all. I suggest that this is one result of the socialist-realist dogma. As in all arts, form in cinema means the integration of the parts into a whole by means of such devices as rhythm, emphasis, balance, significant repetition and variation. All of these are, of course, entirely artificial and even abstract methods, which inevitably involve a certain degree of stylization. But from stylization to 'formalism' is only a step, and who can blame the contemporary Soviet director for not choosing to tread the edge of precipices? The effect of this taboo on formal devices is that Soviet films have become excessively slow, diffuse, and episodic. They are dull because they lack accent, suspense, change of pace. Thus *Paris Commune* has a great deal of action but very little movement. A battle is followed by a debate, which gives way to a love scene, and then another battle, and so on. These episodes are not carried through to any fruition even in themselves: there is simply a dilettantish exploitation of their most obvious surface values, and then—cut to the next scene! Nor are they related to one another except by a thin thread of literary narrative. This suggests another common quality of recent Soviet films: they belong to what might be called the shotgun school of cinematography. To be sure of getting something, you put in everything. *Paris Commune* has battles, political discussions, local color, humor, pathos, melodrama, and even a love story. Similarly, Hollywood has been known to scramble gangsters, high school girls, city editors, night clubs, society dowagers, and love-in-a-cottage into one exhilirating *mélange*. But even on this low plane, Roshal's film is not successful. Hollywood still has the most accomplished cinematic prostitutes.

The Rich Bride (director: Ivan Piriov; American title: *The Country Bride*). This film does for life on a collective farm what *Hit the Deck* did for life in the U. S. Navy. There is a comic old grandfather, gruff but with Charles Winninger twinkle in his eye. There is a love duet, with boy and girl singing into each other's faces as they sit on a *papier mache* tree trunk beside a studio brook, with stuffed birds, artificial daisies, and a property moon in the background. There is a leading comic who wears a tiny mustache and throws himself about with the painful verve of the pre-Chaplin school of comedy. There is a blonde heroine with mascara eyelashes, and a curly-haired leading man with very white teeth. And there is the conventional musical comedy chorus: a bevy of feminine harvest workers who run joyously up and down hill, flourishing scythes and rakes, shrieking with laughter. Everybody in the film, by the way, is excessively gay; there is a continual chuckling, giggling, grinning, and laughing. The musical score is by Dunayevsky, said to be the most popular composer in the Union. He contributes several insipid love songs and "The March of the Tractor Men," in the old-fashioned oompa-Sousa manner. This old-fashioned quality is the most noticeable point about the film. It is the sort of thing Hollywood was doing in the early twenties.

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The 'trailer' advertising *The Rich Bride* gave a clinically accurate summary:

> The boy was a tractor driver—
> The girl was a farm worker—
> The place was a large collective farm—
> See what happened when a comedy of errors came between them!

It only remains to note that *The Rich Bride* has been awarded the Order of Lenin as "the best film on life in the Soviet Union today."[81]

Peter the First (Director Vladimir Petrov; associate: Alexis Tolstoy). It is no secret that Stalin has come to think of himself as a modern Peter the Great, Westernizing Russia at whatever human cost. (That Holy Russia remained a 'dark' nation despite all Peter's efforts to modernize it by autocratic fiat—this lesson in elementary Marxism evidently does not impress Stalin.) The first public intimation of this came in 1931 when Stalin, during the interview he granted Emil Ludwig, expressed great admiration for Peter I. Surprised and slightly shocked, Ludwig said that his professors had taught him Marxism placed small value on heroic personalities in history. "They were vulgarizers of Marxism," replied Stalin. And so when Alexis Tolstoy wrote a historical novel about Peter I, it was hardly surprising that it sold millions of copies, that it was made into an equally 'popular' play ,and finally into a two-part movie on which no expense was spared. The first part was released in this country last winter. More than any other Soviet movie I have seen, *Peter I* makes clear what has happened in Russia. The spotlight is entirely on Peter, whose every eyebrow twitch is invested with deep significance. He is shown almost exclusively in his role as the destroyer of the boyards and priests (precursors of fascism, perhaps?), and there is only the merest suggestion that his policies also ground down the masses. The one clear statement of this, the brief shots of the workers toiling in the Petrograd marshes, is a perfunctory sign of the cross, a ritual gesture hastily performed, and then—back to the Great Leader! The film has been praised for its realistic treatment of Peter. It is true that he is presented as brutal, coarse, ruthless, an Asiatic despot with Potsdam trimmings. But these qualities are not presented satirically, nor even objectively, but with sympathy as the forgivable and inevitable excesses of a great national leader. The implication is that for such gigantic tasks, such heroic leaders as Peter are necessary and must be accepted, warts and all. The entire film is a cynical variation on the no-omelet-without-breaking-eggs theory which has so long been the stock in trade of Fischer, Duranty, and the other apologists for the present regime.

Judged purely as a movie, the first part of *Peter I* is rambling, dragged-out, awkwardly put together, badly photographed, and generally undistinguished, except for the excellent acting one still finds in Russian films. In technique, it is inferior to a similar film made in 1924, Taritsch's *Czar Ivan the Terrible.* Its director, Petrov, is a mediocrity whose cinematic values may be inferred from an article he recently wrote in *Moscow News* about the second part of his film. What seems to interest him most is that the shipyards of Odessa are working on twenty full-scale eighteenth century battleships, every detail faithfully copied from old engravings, while Soviet

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garment workers are making 5,000 absolutely authentic eigtheenth century military uniforms—all for the grand climax of his film, the battle of Poltava. This is to be reenacted by countless hordes of extras in what the *News* proudly refers to as "the Cecil B. De Mille manner."[83] That in 1937 Soviet shipyards should be occupied with making such toys, by the way, is an ironic note on the economic as well as the esthetic tendencies of the present regime.

Lenin in October (Director: V. Romm; associate director: D. Vassiliev). This is the Kremlin's official version of the October revolution and is reported to have been personally supervised by Stalin.[84]* Cinematically, there is little to say about it that has not been said already about *Paris Commune.* The sound track faithfully reproduces the speeches of the actors, the camera trots after them like a well-trained dog. It is all 100 per cent socialist-realist, and it has nothing to do with cinema. Those who think of *Chapayev* as a major film will be disturbed by the connection of Vassiliev with so mediocre a production.

Politically, the film is more interesting. It presents Stalin as Lenin's closest collaborator in making the October revolution against the traitorous opposition of Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev. It would be tedious to go into the numerous falsifications of history which this thesis involves. To mention a few: the meeting of the Central Committee at which the 'auxiliary center' was created [see Trotsky's article, p. 6 of this issue, for the peculiar importance of this 'center' to the Stalin myth] and the meeting at which it was definitely decided to begin the insurrection are presented here as a single meeting;** the insurrection is Stalin's idea, not Lenin's, who begins his speech: "I agree with comrade Stalin that an immediate uprising is necessary . . ."; Lenin denounces the Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev bloc (actually, of course, Trotsky stood with Lenin and Stalin in favor of insurrection) as "traitors" and "strikebreakers"—these men to whom a short time later he will entrust the Red Army and the Communist International. The *New Masses* has described *Lenin in October* as "history catching up with romance in the Russian revolution."

But more important than such falsifications of detail is the caricature of Lenin, who is pictured as a funny little man, full of endearing 'human' mannerisms, bustling happily about the business of revolution, a Foxy Grandpa of the class struggle. In short, as Robert Forsythe enthusiastically put it in the *New Masses,* "a man who might easily have played third base for the Brooklyn Dodgers." Always in the background is Stalin—solid, silent,

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* Those connected with the film seem to have been acutely conscious of its great political significance. *Moscow News* quotes Romm as saying he "felt awed by the tremendous responsibility" and continues, "Romm was hardly able to give any directions to the actors. He was trembling with excitement."[85] As for the unfortunate actor who had to impersonate Stalin—in the film, he seems hardly to breathe. Stiff in his military tunic, he ventures no mannerisms, no stage business beyond a noncommittal puffing on his big pipe. The other actors become noticeably constrained in their scenes with this human torpedo, charged with destruction. Even the ebullient Lenin quiets down when Stalin glides silently into the scene.

** According to Trotsky, the 'auxiliary center' was composed of Stalin, Sverdlov, Uritsky, Dzerzhinsky and Bubnov. In this film, however, Bubnov is omitted, undoubtedly because last year he fell into disfavor and was removed from his post as Commissar of Education. The pettiness of the Stalin School of Falsification is as remarkable as its large scope.

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reassuring. Lenin's first words on arriving in Petrograd are, "Where is Stalin? Send him to me at once!" Whenever he gets into difficulties, he sends for Stalin. In Eugene Lyons' words: "Lenin is shown as the 'front,' a whimsical and much too human front. Behind him, doing the real work, giving the revolution its stamina is Stalin. . . The thought implicit in every foot of film is: what *would* nice old Lenin have done without Stalin?"[86] This comes out amusingly in the scene where Lenin—who is absent-minded, the lovable old fellow!—is going out without his overcoat, and Stalin, in a big brotherly way, impresses on him the importance of dressing warmly in this uncertain fall weather. Romm missed a chance here for the perfect theme song for his film: "Button up your overcoat—Take good care of yourself—You belong to me!"

But *Lenin in October* has implications which go far beyond the question of whether Stalin or Trotsky or Lenin made the 1917 revolution. The very nature of that event itself is involved. Here it is depicted as an orderly coup d'etat, engineered by two Great Leaders with some help from the sailors of the Baltic fleet. The workers appear only in one or two brief 'mob scenes.' When Lenin appears at the Winter Palace after its capture, the victorious proletariat is pushed back by sailors just as in bourgeois nations the police hold back crowds on similar occasions. One also recalls the ragged little soldier looking at Lenin and declaring in surprise, "Why, he's just like one of us!" . . .the young Bolshevik and his wife gazing, in cowlike adoration, at the sleeping figure of The Leader . . . the series of brief shots showing the progress of the revolution throughout the city, each one preceded by the caption: BY ORDER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY COMMITTEE. Here is no confused, disorderly proletarian upsurge such as Eisenstein showed us in *October. This* revolution runs on schedule, taking its orders from above.

It is especially interesting to compare this film's treatment of the storming of the Winter Palace with Eisenstein's. There is the same scrambling over the tall ironwork gates, the same panicky surrender of the Kerensky ministers, even—gruesome mockery—such direct imitations as the shot of the cruiser *Aurora* framed by the risen drawbridge, and the perfect circle of a stone ball on a parapet overlooking the placid, misty harbor. But in spirit, what a contrast! In *October,* the attack was made by a mob of civilians, sailors, soldiers, and leather-jacketted Bolsheviks. Here, wave on wave of blue-clad sailors sweep over the defenders, roll up the long marble staircases, irresistibly, in close, orderly ranks. The destruction that in *October* falls upon the Czarina's ikon-hung boudoir is answered here by a 'bit' in which the leader of the Bolsheviks cautions the mob not to injure the statuary. In *October,* this leader is a wild-haired young intellectual, his pince-nez askew and his necktie under his ear, who excitedly brandishes a pistol as he receives the capitulation of the Kerensky cabinet. Here he is a common-sense looking fellow, quite businesslike and stolid, who at the supreme moment of the enemy's surrender, strikes a comic, 'human' note by pulling out a pocket comb and running it through his hair.* Both films end with a close-up of Lenin speaking at the Congress of the Soviets immediately after the fall of the Winter Palace. But there is one final touch in the 1937 version which

* This seems to be the type revolutionary in the cinema of socialist realism. We meet him again in *The Return of Maxim*—a matter-of-fact, practical sort who would make an excellent C.I.O. organizer.

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is worth noting. As Lenin begins to speak, his face lit up with victory, his gestures expansive and triumphant, the figure of Stalin moves slowly across the background, behind the other figures on the platform, until he is standing directly behind Lenin as the film ends. The intention no doubt was to suggest the legitimacy of his succession, but the actual effect is almost sinister: the cold, impassive face of Stalin looming up suddenly behind the smiling face of Lenin, radiant in his hour of triumph. Here is dramatic irony in the classical tradition: the audience sees the Nemesis which is still invisible to the hero.

Dead End

Such is the Soviet cinema of today. But perhaps quality has been sacrificed to quantity? Perhaps the industry has been flooding the backward regions of Russia with films, of slight esthetic interest but important as mass education? On the contrary, the paralysis which had seized on production in 1930 has, if anything, been intensified. In the fall of 1935, Shumiatsky returned from America full of grandiose dreams of a 'Soviet Hollywood' on the shores of the Black Sea, where 8,000 film workers would turn out 800 feature pictures a year. Millions of rubles were spent on surveys, professors of meterology took lengthy observations, American consultants were engaged to draw up blueprints, but at last report the project had been postponed "indefinitely" because of "practical difficulties."[87] Shumiatsky also talked a good deal about his plans to 'Americanize' the industry: by the end of 1936, the 3,000 existing sound theatres would be increased to 12,000, etc., etc. Usievitch, then head of Sovkino, tried to arrange an exchange of Soviet films for American equipment. But he found there was no longer any appreciable market for Soviet films in the United States.[88] It was one of those contradictions which give grey hairs to Soviet bureaucrats. For political reasons, the Kremlin had insisted that films be made in the Hollywood manner. But now when the further carrying out of this 'Americanization' called for American equipment, this proved impossible to obtain because American audiences were not interested in imitations of Hollywood films.

Things got worse and worse. In 1935, 120 films were planned and 43 were actually produced. In 1936, 165 were planned, 46 produced, and only 33 released for public showing.[89] Surveying these, *Izvestia* called 9 "successful," 19 "average," and 5 "simple rubbish."[90]* At the same time, *Pravda* sharply criticised the industry for falling so far behind its Plan.

* That *Izvestia's* criteria were not exacting is indicated by its including among the nine "successful" films *Party Ticket* and Alexandrov's *Circus*. These apparently were not considered successful enough to export to this country, but one gets some idea of their quality from a recent article by H. V. Meyrowitz. *Party Ticket*, Mr. Meyrowitz thinks was the worst movie he saw during his stay in the Soviet Union, and he documents his opinion. As for *Circus*, he reports a conversation with one of the leading directors in the new Vertov school: "Esther Shub was sitting in front of me. I went to her after the performance . . . and I looked at her and said, "Well?" and she looked at me with a very sad face and said, "Well?"[91]

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Shumiatsky replied (1) that he would make 800 films in 1940, and (2) that the original 1937 Plan of 123 films was "unrealistic" and must be cut to 60. In the first six months of 1937 just four pictures were produced, and on June 1, 1937, only thirteen scenarios were in production.[92] The Plan called for 70,000 movie theatres by the end of 1937, but less than half that many existed by then. It was becoming clear even to the Kremlin that Shumiatsky would have to go. In less complicated societies, he would have been dismissed for inefficiency. But in the Russia of Stalin such directness would be out of question. The frame-up system has reached the point of being automatic, so that guilty and innocent alike must be framed. In Shumiatsky's case, it is true, a frame-up was perhaps an administrative necessity. To have simply fired him as a bungler would have reflected on the regime which had kept him in office eight years.

The Shumiatsky frame-up showed imagination and humor. The basic charge was the usual banality to the effect that he had "permitted savage veteran spies, Trotskyist and Bukharinist agents, and hirelings of Japanese and German fascism to perform their wrecking deeds in the Soviet cinema." But the specific incident which the stage managers chose to bring about Shumiatsky downfall was something quite original. The Children's Film Trust had produced a version of Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Early in 1938, *Soviet Art,* organ of the Central Art Committee denounced this film as bourgeois (to get love interest, Jim Hawkins had been changed into Jenny Hawkins, with whom Dr. Livesey falls in love), and also as leftist (to get a class angle, the Irish revolutionary movement had been dragged in). If the producers had to do this, asked *Soviet Art,* why had they not at least read Karl Marx's 1869 letter on the Irish situation? This Irish rebellion idea had been approved of by Shumiatsky and three other high executives, "who were later exposed as enemies of the people." A reference in the review to Shumiatsky as "the former chief" of the cinema industry was the first public intimation of his fall. He himself was not accused of wrecking but merely of "falling into the hands of wreckers who wormed their way into the administration of cinematography." He is today among the 'missing.'[93]

The Shumiatsky debacle stimulated much comment in the Soviet press as to what was wrong with the cinema. Four major weaknesses seemed to exist:

1. *The incompetence of the Shumiatsky administration, which oscillated between visions of the future and complete paralysis of decision in the present.* This is the reaction one might expect from executives who are called on to carry out impossibly ambitious plans and at the same time apply a political control which alienates the directors and scenarist they must depend on for production. The official excuse for the collapse is that Shumiatsky was given too much power. As an Amkino official put it, "Naturally, with only one man looking after things, there was bound to be relaxation of vigilance in some directions and resulting mismanagement."[94] Without asking who

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gave Shumiatsky his power, one might point out that a statement about "only one man looking after things" is a two-edged sword in Russia today.

2. *A failure to make use of available human material, which was largely due to the antagonism existing between the bureaucracy and the cinema workers.* We have seen how it was with the better known directors, who have remained idle often for years at a time. But this sort of thing was general. A census taken in 1937 of the 143 directors who had made one or more full-length picture showed that 65 were directing pictures or preparing to do so, 45 were writing scenarios, and 33 were doing nothing. Out of 166 assistant directors, 67 were idle. The census was taken in perfect production weather.[95]

3. *Difficulty in getting usable scenarios.* Ever since the cinema was Stalinized, the scenario department has been the bottleneck of production. "At present, there is a story crisis in the industry," the head of Sovkino said in 1930.[96] And in 1937 we read: "Dissection of the industry's troubles appears so far to have convinced a majority of the critics that the true villains of the situation are the scenarists, who write badly and slowly, and the executives . . ." In 1935, the report continues, the Moscow studio paid 1,129,000 rubles for 38 completed scenarios. Of these only 8 were judged "worthy of production," making the average cost of each usable scenario 141,125 rubles.[97] All this is interesting because, politically, the scenarist is in an even more perilous position than the director, since he must supply the ideological content of the film. It is not surprising that in recent years Soviet scenarists, in Ivor Montagu's phrase, have become "cautious."

4. *Production delays caused by changes in the political line, and wholesale scrapping of completed films for political reasons.* As examples of the first, Pudovkin's *Deserter* and Kovintsev-Trauberg's *The Youth of Maxim* may be mentioned. As for the second, see Yermolayev's recent article in *Pravda,* which states that 30 per cent of the films produced in 1935 and 1936 (37 out of a total 126) were discarded as *brak* ('spoiled') at a loss of 15,000,000 rubles. In 1937 Soyuzkino lost 5,000,000 on two *brak* films alone: *Great Wings* and *Bezhin Meadow.*[98]

It is clear that these deficiencies cannot be charged merely to Shumiatsky's personal shortcomings. Their roots are political, involving the regime of which Shumiatsky was a faithful servant. The delegation of British film technicians which in the spring of 1937 made a friendly inspection tour of the Soviet movie industry understood this well enough. Its report, sympathetic and well-documented, concludes: "We submit that the present policy of the Soviet state is bound to be antagonistic to the Soviet film industry."[99]

To the admonitions of friendly critics and the blunt warnings of experience, the Kremlin has replied by replacing Shumiatsky with—an agent of the Secret Police.

The NKVD Takes Over

The psychological atmosphere of the interregnum after Shumiatsky's fall is symbolized by the fact that the New York office of Amkino stopped

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answering its phone. It was during this uneasy period that Stalin warned a gathering of film workers: "Soviet power expects successes from you!"[100] At length, on March 23, 1938, the Council of People's Commissars appointed a receiver for the bankrupt industry in the form of the All-Union Committee on Cinema. Precisely the same task faces the Committee in 1938 as faced Shumiatsky in 1930: to rationalize, plan, economize, and, above all, speed up production. So far there are no indications it will be any more successful, since, as is hardly surprising, there is no evidence that the Committee's political and esthetic line differs in the slightest from that of 'the former chief.' The Kremlin's more naive apologists have convinced themselves that Shumiatsky single-handed and contrary to the orders of the Kremlin sabotaged the Soviet cinema; they expect great things of this latest replacing of Tweedledum by Tweedledee. A few straws already in the wind indicate how much may be expected . . . For 1938 the Committee has announced the modest total of 51 feature pictures. "The large number of films devoted to the problems of Soviet patriotism, defense and the struggle against Fascist agents is explained by the fact that these problems are of vital interest at the present time."[101] . . . When Petrov has finished the second part of *Peter I,* he is to make a film of Alexis Tolstoy's latest contribution to the Stalin Myth: *Grain,* a novel about Stalin's one exploit during the Civil War, the defense of Tsaritsyn (now Stalingrad) . . . Friedrich Wolf's anti-Nazi play, *Professor Mamlock,* is to be "broadened" to make a Popular Front film. . . The Committee has issued a plea to writers for more scenarios on contemporary Soviet life. . . Ermler's latest film, *The Great Citizen,* shows Kirov struggling against the Trotsky-Zinoviev gang (who try to restore capitalism) in the 1925-27 period. "The scenario for *The Great Citizen* was completed May, 1936, but filming did not begin until late in 1937, since the Trotskyist-Bukharinist wreckers in the management of the Leningrad Film Studios sought to prevent its production in every way."[102] Thus *Moscow News* compounds unreality on unreality: an imaginary group of Trotskyist-Bukharinists sabotage a fictional account of what they didn't do ten years ago. 250 copies of Ermler's film have been sent into the rural districts . . . Alexandrov has released a musical comedy about the new Moscow-Volga canal. It is called *Volga-Volga.*

But there is one significant point about the reorganization. The head of the new Committee on Cinema, and Shumiatsky's successor as movie czar, is Semyon Dukelsky, who has been described as "a tough-minded young man" who "came to the motion picture industry straight from the NKVD, or political police."[103] *Moscow News* further reports he was appointed "to introduce firm Bolshevik order" into the cinema. With the arrival of the NKVD on the scene, the degradation of the cinema under the present regime may be said to have reached its logical and inevitable conclusion.

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The first part of this article was published in the July issue of PARTISAN REVIEW. The third and concluding section will discuss the relationship of the Soviet cinema to the masses and to the revolution, and will analyze the social implications of its recent esthetic degeneration. This section will appear in the next issue.

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Poems

The Unbeliever

"He sleeps on the top of a mast"—Bunyan

He sleeps on the top of a mast
With his eyes fast closed.
The sails fall away below him
Like the sheets of his bed,
Leaving out in the air of the night the sleeper's head.

Asleep he was transported there.
Asleep he curled
In a gilded ball on the mast's top,
Or climbed inside
A gilded bird, or blindly seated himself astride.

"I am founded on marble pillars,"
Said a cloud. "I never move.
See the pillars there in the sea?"
Secured in introspection
He peers at the watery pillars of his reflection.

A gull had wings under his
And remarked that the air
Was "like marble." He said, "Up here
I tower through the sky
For the marble wings on my tower-top fly."

But he sleeps on the top of his mast
With his eyes closed tight.
The gull inquired into his dream,
Which was, "I must not fall.
The spangled sea below wants me to fall.
It is hard as diamond; it wants to destroy us all."

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Poem

From a magician's midnight sleeve
The radio-singers
Distribute all their love-songs
Over the dew-wet lawns.
  And like a fortune-teller's
Their marrow-piercing guesses are whatever you believe.

But on the Navy-Yard aerial I find
  Better witnesses
For love on summer nights.
Five remote red lights
  Keep their nests there; Phoenixes
Burning quietly, where the dew cannot climb.

Key West.

Quai D'Orleans

Each barge on the river easily tows
  A mighty wake,
A giant oak-leaf of gray lights
  On duller gray;
And behind it real leaves are floating by,
  Down to the sea.
Mercury-veins on the giant leaves,
  The ripples, make
For the sides of the quai, to extinguish themselves
  Against the walls
As softly as falling-stars come to their ends
  At a point in the sky.
The throngs of small leaves, real leaves, trailing them,
  Go drifting by
To disappear as modestly, down the seas'
  Dissolving halls.
We stand as still as stones to watch
  The leaves and ripples
While light and nervous water hold
  Their interview.
"If what we see could forget us half as easily,"
  I want to tell you,
"As it does itself.—But for life we'll not be rid
  Of the leaves' fossils."

ELIZABETH BISHOP

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William Troy's Myths

James Burnham

THROUGHOUT THE GREATER part of his unusually interesting and often illuminating essay on Thomas Mann (published in the June and July issues of PARTISAN REVIEW), William Troy makes what might be called an "anthropological approach" to Mann's stories and novels. In occasional sentences, however, and particularly in his last two pages, Troy goes far beyond any methodological "approach." Though he does not make his view altogether explicit, he seems to be maintaining: (1) that what I have called the anthropological approach is the *only* basic means whereby to criticize, appreciate and understand art; (2) that the comprehension of experience, life, history and reality as Myth is the *only* adequate comprehension; (3) that Mann, rising above "the 19th century world-view," above Hegel and Marx and any "abstract intellectual construction," has through his use of the Myth become our truest prophet and has displayed in its fullest realization "our only Absolute."

I have no quarrel with Troy's utilization of the "anthropological approach." Its legitimacy in this instance is demonstrated by the results he achieves. It seems to me that through it he has given a more integrated account of Mann's creative work than has yet been done by any other critic. My present concern is with the three more general contentions I have listed, all of which I believe to be both false and dangerous.

(1) To regard the anthropological approach, or any other given approach, as alone legitimate is to be guilty of the usual and perennial Platonic fallacy of hypostatizing a method into an Absolute. The history of the criticism of art and literature is strewn with the skeletons of such Absolutes. Are we simply unable to learn that the legitimacy of any method is decided by the problems we are trying to solve, the purposes to which we hold, and the efficacy of the method in handling the subject-matter in relation to those problems and purposes?

To be able to make a convincing anthropological analysis of Mann's work does not at all prove that a similar analysis would be equally convincing in the case of all other writers. Of course, if the pattern of the analysis is made sufficiently abstract and formal, it always *can* be applied to any work of art or literature. Troy defines the "constant and invariable"

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form of the myth as "the perpetually recurrent pattern of birth and rebirth." But this form is so abstracted as to be without any empirical significance. It is really only a poetic way of saying that "all things change." It applies to all organic life as well as to art and literature; indeed, by a little metaphorical stretching, it applies also to solar systems and electrons. This vast range of application, however, indicates not the "profundity" of the form but simply its lack of material content. It shows that this form is by itself useless in solving the *specific* problems of a *specific* field of phenomena: namely, art and literature. Indeed, Troy's analysis of Mann is illuminating only because he does *not* make use of this generalized "form of the myth" but rather of a special concretization of the myth in the initiation ceremonies and heroic traditions of particular tribal groups. He could not at all make the same *concrete* analysis of many, in fact most, other writers, whether past or contemporary.

Even more important: The possibility of making an anthropological approach to literature does not in the least exclude the possibility and legitimacy of other approaches. What we call works of literature are material objects, produced by the conscious will of men, enjoyed in various ways by other men, their conditions of production and enjoyment limited by social and historical circumstances as well as by the psychological traits of authors and readers. Thus, as the context changes, works of literature figure variously, as psychological, anthropological, sociological, economic phenomena. All that Troy says about Mann may be true; but it is at the same time quite possible to give a consistent and true analysis of Mann's work from, say, a psychoanalytic or a sociological point of view. Troy may not be interested in such analyses, or he may believe that they do not lead as ably as his type of analysis to a fuller enjoyment of Mann's work. The latter opinion is a psychological one and can be at least approximately tested; the former would be an expression of Troy's preferences. Neither justifies the belief that in anthropology and the myth we find the magic key to the unknown and the unknowable.

(2) The objection to the Myth as "our only Absolute," to the idea that the comprehension of experience, life, history and reality as Myth is the *only* adequate comprehension, is the objection to all Absolutes, however worded or disguised. Among proposed Absolutes, however, I confess I find the Myth peculiarly dangerous. The Myth, according to Troy's own account, exists only "in the pure realm of the imagination"; it is pure symbol; it is in no way tied to "the world of contemporary reality," to "the actual."

What this means is that the Myth is a completely *irresponsible* Absolute, a hopelessly subjective Absolute, released from any check or control. Neither logic nor experiment confounds it. In its pure realm of the imagination it can go its own sweet way. Chucked overboard is all centuries-

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assembled baggage of laboratory and telescope, of carefully elaborated and ever-revised hypotheses, of plans rationally analyzed and predictions precisely made and verified, of theories called ever to account, publicly, before the eyes of all who wish to see, by the marshaled evidence. From this Troy beckons us once more to—re-baptizing it as Myth—the dark religion of the blood.

(3) By raising Mann to the pinnacle he achieves in Troy's two final paragraphs, Troy does equal disservice to the artist and his art, on the one side, to science and politics on the other. Troy is, in effect, asking us to *substitute* the artist for the scientist and politician, the works of art for science and politics. In no other way can the final paragraphs be understood. Mann, we are told, goes beyond Hegel and Marx. He tells us about "the dialectic process working itself out on the *whole* ground of human reality." He portrays in Joseph the "guide to 'a free and enlightened humanity.' " In short he tells us the truth and the ideal.

But if we judge Mann in such terms, we must take him in his entirety: we must consider not merely the novels and stories but the essays, speeches and actions as well. If we judge him from the standard of truth, we must conclude that he has failed us; if we look upon him as prophet, we must decide that he is a false prophet.

It was in the midst of Mann's American lecture tour that there took place the third and foulest of the Moscow trials. As he nightly summoned his audiences to join him in aspiration toward Democracy and Truth, not one word of protest, not one suggestion, came from him against history's most degraded and perverted assault on democracy and truth. Doubtless, in the pure realm of the myth-imagtnation it is not necessary to soil one's ideals with actuality. But that realm is not too pure to prevent the profitable circulation of Mann's books within the Soviet Union, his well-paid articles in the Stalinist-controlled press, his audiences packed with cash-paying Stalinist sympathizers, and his present large and very concrete part in the campaign to enlist the peoples of the democratic-imperialist countries in an imperialist holy war against the fascist nations.

This is nothing new for Mann. In the years preceding Hitler in Germany, he left the pure realm of the imagination long enough to make speeches and write articles advocating the policies of bourgeois-democratic centrism which played so vital a rôle in making Hitler's victory possible. Nor was his exile the burning martyrdom for principle that popular fancy now pictures it. It was the Nazis, not he, who compelled his exile. He made clear, by word and act, that he was prepared to make peace with Nazism; but the Nazis spurned his offers. And now in this country he begins with the same part. Through his lovely myth of Democracy and Truth he helps strengthen the chains of a rotted society, helps bind the people to a reality

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which turns the ideal of "a free and enlightened humanity" into a grim and shameful farce.

If we are to judge Mann as Troy proposes to judge him, we must reject him and all his works. It is only by introducing a reasonable and proper separation—by insisting that Mann as novelist is *not* in every respect Mann the prophet and philosopher and politician, by maintaining that there are values in his novels having a relative independence of social and political values—that we can continue to accept the novels. Our judgments of the value of works of art are in the last analysis linked with the whole structure of our value judgments. That is why I, for one, find in Mann's final "frank and open exploitation of the myth" not what Troy does: the fruitful culmination of his earlier work, the climax and apotheosis of his achievement; but the proof of failure. By reverting to the myth, Mann has shown not his solution of but his inability to solve the problem of *The Magic Mountain.* He has turned from the challenge of his own times, a challenge so magnificently recognized and explored in his early and middle work, back to a refuge which for all its glittering exterior is inhabited by dead bones only. And as these last years of his show, he will find as he continues in residence there that one by one those bright creatures of the mind and spirit, so wonderfully alive in his great novels and stories, will sicken also, and die.

(William Troy will reply to James Burnham in the next issue.)

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Correspondence

Poet Objects!

Dear Editors:

This letter cannot be called disinterested, but I believe at any rate it is impersonally partial.

Your new number read, and it strikes me with even greater force that the critical function of the Review is far more creative than is the creative function. I am glad to see LONG reviews and articles. Length in these things is important. But as for Mary King's story, to which you award half the prize, if your judgment is correct and it is really tops over practically 300 stories, PARTISAN REVIEW is not serving the public by such a contest and is, esthetically, wasting its money.

What is this story really worth? It can be estimated in a very few words. Its virtues, aside from a few good poetic images, are wholly negative. It simply does not commit any of the popular or vulgar errors of contemporary short story writing. In fact, its plot hardly entitles it to be a short story, except as it is, unprogressively, Chekhovian, for after all it has not the accomplishment of Chekhov. The theme is banal, and excusable only as it be held at a very profound level. While some of the incidental intuitions are genuinely poetic, the vitality of a Sherwood Anderson, at least, is needed to give it real distinction. In fact, apart from its contemporary social implications, which are not precisely in the texture of the story itself, there is nothing in it which poetry has not said for thousands of years.

Without going into the question of why such sentiments seem more palatable to you in prose than in poetry, I do suggest, emphatically, that you would improve the value of the magazine by confining it to criticism, and excluding both poetry and fiction. For on the basis of what you have published of the two latter categories, the REVIEW has no reason for a monthly existence.

PARKER TYLER,
New York City.

Newsstands and Politics

Nancy Macdonald, business manager,
Dear Friend,

It is some time since I have written in. However, am buying PARTISAN REVIEW each month from the news stands and interested as much as ever in its progress. Unfortunately here in Calgary the Stalinists have a monopoly on the news stands. Most of the stands, at least the largest, are operated by the followers of Stalin and consequently they hesitate to display the Review, which they claim to be a counter-revolutionary sheet, etc. One dealer said he wouldn't sell any more and strung up a row of *New Masses* in its place. However, he couldn't sell them and now he has one PARTISAN REVIEW on display, at least a fringe of same.

I try to be very tolerant and not enter into a debate with these fanatical creatures, but some big mogul of the Party (C. P.) has no doubt tipped them off as to this dangerous literature.

My economic status has improved but slightly since writing last. However, a bumper crop is promised in the West this coming fall. If such should materialize you can depend on me taking out a year's sub to the P.R. In the meantime best of wishes and that the heat is not too vicious in New York this summer. It is hot enough here just now.

Proletarian Greetings,
CHAS. LEMESURIER,
Calgary, Canada.

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Index Wanted

Gentlemen:

I intend having my issues of PARTISAN REVIEW bound. If you print an index for each volume, would you be good enough to supply me with a copy for your most recent volume?

May I suggest at the same time that the six issues for each volume you issue have their pages numbered consecutively instead of having each issue numbered as a volume in itself. The former method will greatly facilitate the work of any person using your magazine for reference purposes.

Wishing you every success in the publication of PARTISAN REVIEW, the best magazine in the market today, I remain,

S. SHAPIRO,
Montreal, Canada.

Editor's Note: We had not thought of PARTISAN REVIEW as a reference work, but if there is any general demand among our readers for consecutively numbered pages, we shall be glad to comply.

Three Views of Cinema Article

Part I of Dwight Macdonald's article on the Soviet cinema was sent in manuscript, for possible criticism and correction, to Seymour Stern, editor of the late *Cinema Quarterly,* and to Jay Leyda, who is the librarian of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library. Mr. Stern is well known as an exponent of revolutionary cinema—using the term in its esthetic as well as its social sense—and Mr. Leyda is completing a history of the Soviet cinema, to be published this winter by the Museum. The attempt to elicit corrections, however, was not successful: Mr. Stern thought too highly of the article to suggest more than minor changes, while Mr. Leyda felt it was on too low a level to merit criticism. Their letters appear below. The third letter is from the movie critic of the City College of N. Y. *Campus.*

Dear Macdonald,

I don't feel qualified to add to or subtract from, or in any way modify, a critique of the Soviet cinema as well-documented and as profoundly unanswerable as the one you have written. Just as I expected, you have done a superlative job, one that will leave a deep and lasting mark to guide those who wish to preserve a decent respect for the truth. The picture you have painted is heart-rending and sickening, and you have shown genuine courage in painting it at this time. It is rather trite, I feel, to congratulate you for your conception and execution of this piece, but as an indication of my respect for it I want to tell you that I consider it great enough to make even the Stalinist bureaucrats see the light. In my opinion it is destined to have far-reaching *creative* consequences in the Soviet Union —not at once, perhaps, but after those in control have gotten over their quick heat of anger and have begun to rub their chins and meditate on what you have written. Then, indeed, will your critique make history. I feel this development as inevitable.

I've made a few margin notes for minor changes—very minor, and question-marks after the word "ultra-left" in several places where your use of it confused me. (The confusion is no doubt in my mind, but I'd like you to explain why "ultra-left" in those particular connections). Also, there is one bit of history which, though perhaps not important in itself, ought to be included for the sake of the record. It can be inserted as a footnote: I refer to the fact that the great sequences of "A Fragment of an Empire"—precisely those sequences which made the picture one of the glories of the golden age (the scene on the battlefield, the railroad junction on the steppe, the arrival of the peasant in Leningrad, the restoration of the peasant's memory, etc.)—were done not by Ermler, but by Eisenstein. Few people know this, for it has been kept more or less of a trade secret in the U.S.S.R. and has never been published abroad, but it remains, notwithstanding its obscurity, an historical fact. I had it directly from Eisenstein himself (in Hollywood), also from Montagu and others, who were in the Soviet Union at the time. Ermler had bungled the production pretty badly, and after much time and money had been wasted, Eisenstein was called in to salvage the picture as best he could. This he accomplished by doing through montage what Ermler had vainly sought to do by the conventional Hollywood method of acting. Ermler treated what was predominantly a psychological narrative in exactly the manner that any competent American jobster,

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such as Capra, Vidor, De Mille, etc., would have treated it, that is, as essentially a photographed stage play. Eisenstein stepped in, took control out of Ermler's fumbling hands, and the result was a *film*. An interesting, and possibly even significant, incident, inasmuch as the same Ermler has since become one of the celebrated exponents of what is euphemistically called 'socialist realism'.

SEYMOUR STERN.

Dear Mr. Macdonald:

Enclosed is your article. I suppose I should thank you for sending it to me, but I can hardly thank you for writing it. With its factual tenth untrue, and its nine-tenths of illogical conclusions, it does not materially advance the knowledge on the subject you have chosen. Even if you were sincere in your wish to tell "a straight story" (your phrase), I am afraid I would not be willing to assist the article's absurdities by attempting to lend them the credibility that they now lack. I did not realize before that PARTISAN REVIEW depended so completely on an uninformed reading public.

My only criticism that you may care to hear is that your article exhibits its motives too clearly. I would prefer to think that the errors, in premise and detail, are unconcious, but the distortions of fact and quotation are too obviously channeled towards some childishly destructive purpose.

Forgive me if I have been too general in my comments, but I did not feel that you either needed or wanted them.

JAY LEYDA.

Footnote by Dwight Macdonald: On receiving this extraordinary letter, I at once called up Mr. Leyda to make it clear that I both needed and wanted his specific comments. As a result, we ate a most friendly lunch together, in the course of which it became clear that we disagreed profoundly as to both the esthetic and political nature of the recent Soviet cinema, and that this disagreement was the basis for Mr. Leyda's letter. I must also add that Mr. Leyda declined an invitation to point out to the readers of PARTISAN REVIEW his specific objections to the article, suggesting that his forthcoming book on the subject would indicate clearly enough his dissenting opinions. We look forward to reviewing Mr. Leyda's book in our columns.

Dear Mr. Macdonald:

Your article on the Soviet cinema—first announced, you know, in the December issue—was a long time in the coming; and I want to tell you that I think the first part is fine. But if I may, I should like to make several points:— and the first one is a caution.

The PARTISAN REVIEW, on the whole, has a tendency towards what might be called "Stalin-baiting". Do not mistake my point: not that I wish to defend Stalin or Stalinism. But it seems to me quite clear that persistent deprecatory references only serve (on the one hand) to deepen slightly the prejudices that anti-Stalinists of the P. R. degree hold, but—more important—tend greatly to vitiate your argument in the eyes of those who are not quite willing (or ready) to accept the full-bodied bitterness of your opposition. This is not to ask you to pull punches, nor to sacrifice principles. It is, as our friends of the Party persuasion always have it, just a change in tactics.

The method of the first part of your article was largely narrational, which, I think, was necessary and proper. Yet a danger is inherent here—one that was not quite skirted in the latter part of your piece. That is to say, a demonstration of the decline of the Soviet cinema must be a critical demonstration—an analysis of the deteriorating quality: in theme and in technique. Your early consideration of the period of decline seemed rather to fall back to the "Stalin-had-a-hand-in-it-thus-it-was-bad" attitude,—just as you think (perhaps justly from your position; but not from another; and whom are you trying to convince?) that the reference to the activity of "a young bureaucrat" is a telling point in your favor . . . Try to avoid cliches of Stalinist - anti-Stalinist controversy in the crucial criticisms of your analysis. For greatest effectiveness use descriptions and terminology that even the Stalinist must grant. If the premises cannot be challenged, the conclusions must be considered. I fear that your conclusions may not be considered in the (irrevelant) wrangle over 'Stalinist' (used contemptuously all over the place), 'censorship', 'bureaucracy', etc. . . .

I wonder how far you'll bring your

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study. Certainly in recent weeks the Cameo should have supplied you with 'cases in point'. *Lenin in October* is something of a set-up; as the *Times* critic did not say, it was bad history, bad biography, and above all bad cinema. What I'd like to call your attention to—if you haven't already seen and considered it—is *The Country Bride*. This was the film that won some Soviet award for being the most realistic motion-picture of contemporary Russian life (probably the only motion-picture of C. R. L.). But the realism was amazing as Lenfilm took over the whole Hollywood technique of musicomedy. After the fashion of Dick Powell-Ruby Keeler, the collective farm at every other opportunity breaks into song collectively, makes love collectively,—the farcial mass activities that waitresses and stenographers indulge in in Hollywood films. But does Hollywood pretend this to be realism?

One point I should like to see you make —I made it in some of my reviews for the City College *Campus*—is that the Soviet cinema is presenting a very extraordinary paradox. For years we had been asking the studios, ever shaking in the ten days that shook the world, to bring up their cameras to contemporary Russia, and give us a glimpse of socialism, twenty years after. The paradox is that the Soviet cinema has come closer to the present by moving back to the past—to the eighteenth century as in *Peter the First,* a most revealing (as you suggested) Soviet document. Here was a suggestion, clear and unmistakable, of contemporary attitudes — hero-worship, idolatry,—and movements—fierce belligerent nationalism—that few Soviet films have yielded: intentionally or no.

Yours sincerely,

MELVIN J. LASKY.

James Rorty writes us: "The last two copies of PARTISAN REVIEW exhibit so much excellence, so much seriousness and effort that I feel moved to write you: the critique of Malraux by Dupee, Trilling's review of Dos Passos, and Rahv's piece—the most penetrating thing I have seen on the last trials, and much else that is good or better than good. I think it is important that your magazine entrench itself and extend its influence." . . . Mary Schneider, of the United Chocolate Workers, writes us from Hershey, Pa.: "I have enjoyed PARTISAN REVIEW and I am enclosing a check for two subscriptions. It is one of the MUST HAVES in the magazine field." . . . Dorothy Brewster writes from New York City: "I have been on the whole rather unfavorably impressed with the tone of several of the articles I have read; as, for example, the dismissal of the novel of Malraux as 'thrown up by the stooge politics of people's frontism'. And after reading Edmund Wilson's prolet-play, with its little jibe at the League of American Writers, I feel sorry that he didn't succeed in getting back to the arms of Charles Lamb—a desire he expressed some time ago in the *New Republic.*" . . . Raja Rao writes from Menton, France: "A friend of mine has sent on to me a copy of your magazine, which I like very much indeed . . . I must, however, point out that I am not a hundred per cent Marxist. Far from it. But I am left-wing, and more in sympathy with the opposition groups than with the present-day Communist Party . . . Accept my friendly greetings."

Thomas W. Copeland writes from Yale: "I am a bit confused, as I bet many other of your readers and non-readers are, by your title. You make the clearest and soundest of editorial statements about the magazine's non-partisanship, and yet there is the title of the magazine! Is that to startle, puzzle, fillip the reader's attention? I have read most of your articles and can't see that you actually take any partisan position. Have you ever thought of changing names?" (Editors' Note: Yes, but not for the same reasons.) . . . Frederick Thon writes from Rockport, Mass.: "May I say that I, for one, agree wholeheartedly with your principles? There is need for your magazine, although I suspect you will have a very difficult time making a go of it. I hope you will encourage the younger writers like Agee and Eleanor Clark. They need the outlet you provide and you need their strength. And I hope you can keep free from the narrow factional quarrels of New York City. It is a question in my mind whether you are big enough to do this. I hope you can, and will." . . . Celia Salkin writes from Passaic, N. J.: "PARTISAN REVIEW poetry is terrible, but I can stand a lot of Wilson, McCarthy, D. Macdonald, and Gide." . . . Weldon Kees writes from Denver, Colorado: "You cer-

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tainly have all kinds of credit coming to you for the first-rate job you're doing with the magazine. I hope that before long it may be possible for you to enlarge the magazine so as to print more of the excellent young writers—particularly short story writers—whose outlets are damned few these days." (Editors' Note: Before we enlarge the magazine, however, we would like to be more certain than we now are of the existence of this reservoir of untapped talent.)

Andre Breton writes us: "I am planning to found in Paris a magazine along much the same lines as yours, and I am filled with confidence and hope in their common destinies."

Julian Symons, editor of *Twentieth Century Verse,* writes from London to our colleague, F. W. Dupee: "I thought the review of British periodicals very interesting and good . . . About William Carlos Williams: do you know that *nobody* in England (outside the circle you call "Bohemian") thinks well of W.C.W. or of Marianne Moore or Cummings or Ezra. Just as you think Prokosch has been 'inflated over here', so it seems to us that these old bulls of the Right and Left, reactionary as *poets* whatever may be their nominal political standing, are 'inflated' on the U. S. . . ."

George Novack, secretary of the American Fund for Political Prisoners and Refugees, Room 1609, 100 Fifth Ave., New York City, requests us to print the following appeal for funds: "The growing tide of reaction in Europe has forced thousands of revolutionary workers to flee their homes . . Denied relief by bourgeois and Stalinist-controlled relief organizations because of their political beliefs, harried by the government, they lead a precarious existence. Many, driven to desperation, have turned to suicide as the only alternative to slow starvation. . . . The American Fund for Political Prisoners and Refugees has been organized to aid these revolutionists, by furnishing relief for them and their families, helping them fight deportation to fascist countries and securing visas and transportation to countries which offer them the opportunity to work. We call upon all friends of democratic rights to help us aid the most persecuted people in Europe."

S. S. Olans, Dorchester, Mass., writes of Meyer Schapiro's "Looking Forward to Looking Backward" (July): "Mumford is not a Marxist, neither was Veblen. Does that mean we must dismiss him? . . . Mumford's use of the word organic is not quite so fuzzy as Schapiro makes it out. In a world scarred by all kinds of dualisms, abstractions, and unbalances, emphasis on the organic is a welcome reaction." . . . On the other hand, Daniel Patterson, Cleveland, finds Schapiro's criticism of Mr. Mumford an excellent service to the left wing. "It was necessary to point out that Mumford has made a profession out of putting down in muddy prose the dreams that can only come true in a classless society."

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Ripostes

Exit Transition

To signalize its tenth anniversary, *Transition* has put out a Spring, 1938, number of almost four hundred pages. The cover design by Kandinsky is exceptionally pleasing, the typography is readable, but after going through the volume, I asked: transiton to what? In an editorial foreword, Eugene Jolas answers: "*Transition* was founded in 1927 as a more or less eclectic organ, with the basic aim of opposing to the then prevailing photographic naturalism a more imaginative concept of prose and poetry. It was the first modern review published in Europe or America to recognize the 'malady of language'. It sought the de-banalization of creative language by encouraging the phantasmatic metaphor and the exploration of neologistic possibilities." An admirable program—ten years ago. But today, after a decade in transit, the *Transition* group seems no closer to either of their two great goals: the integration into literature of the 'night mind' and the 'revolution of the word'. It begins to appear that they have been building a bridge out into a great emptiness.

The only contributions in this latest—and, I venture, last—issue of *Transition* which seemed to me of any importance were the final instalment of Kafka's "Metamorphosis", a new fragment of Joyce's "Work in Progress", and Max Brod's article on Kafka. But a contemporary magazine can hardly base itself on Joyce and Kafka. As for the rest, I constantly had the feeling I had read it all before. For ten years *Transition* has been printing such things as Samuel Beckett's "Ooftish", Henry Miller's "The Cosmological Eye", and Barzun's "Fragment de l'Universelle Poeme", the last being printed horizontally on a three-foot insert which unfolds like a road map. By now this sort of thing has become as routinized and formulized as the conventional literary style *Transition* was founded to fight. The revolution of the word is finding its Thermidor. The fragment of Joyce presents much the same appearance (and serves much the same purpose) among these contributions as the sanctified corpse of Lenin among the epigones of the Kremlin.

Why is this? The philistine will say that you can't keep a gag on ice for ten years; the Dadaists at least knew enough to shut up shop when the joke grew stale. But for all its bombast and affection, *Transition* cannot be dismissed as a curiosity of literature. Its attack on outworn literary forms, its analytical study of language, its attempt to bring the findings of psychoanalysis into contact with literature—these were, and still are, undertakings of the first importance. Yet it has failed to develop its approach beyond the experimental stage, and the whole movement is now pretty clearly petering out. Again one asks, why?

Mr. Jolas concludes his foreword: "Throughout its ten years of existence, *Transition* has faithfully adhered to a belief in the primacy of the creative spirit. Nor did it climb on the band-wagon, when a split occured in the ranks of writers everywhere simultaneously with the world-depression in 1930, but took its stand on the side of a metaphysical, as opposed to a materialist-economic, interpretation of life. In 1932 it announced: 'Poetry is vertical'. The bankruptcy of sociological literature and art should now be fairly obvious even to the most zealous activist of the arts." Just what the verticality of poetry—which I am willing to grant, for the sake of the argument—has to do with the bankruptcy of what Mr. Jolas calls 'sociological literature' is not clear. But it would be disingenuous to deny that such literature, if not actually bankrupt, is at least due for a reorganizing committee. The great hopes of the 1929-1933 period in this country and of the Auden-Spender-Lewis movement in England have been deflated almost as badly as *Transition's* program. These defeats seem to me explicable, basically, only on economic, social and political grounds. The decay of *Transition* is symptomatic at once of the decay of bourgeois culture, even in its most 'advanced' strata, and of the impossibility of maintaining an above-the-battle attitude in a period of great social

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tension. The difficulties of 'proletarian literature' are partly due to the decadence of bourgeois culture—since practically all 'proletarian' writers are renegade members of the bourgeoisie, which controls the only cultural apparatus existing under capitalism —and partly to the degeneration of a large section of the radical movement. The one great advantage for the future that the 'proletarians'—some of them, at least—have over the *Transition* group is that they are at least aware that they have suffered reverses, and are conscious of the basic causes of their defeat. Mr. Jolas seems to think all is well with the revolution of the word. He may have mastered the Freudian unconscious, but his social unconsciousness flourishes unchecked. At a time when the Western world is split into rival imperialisms and nationalisms more ruinously than ever before, he trumpets forth the slogan: "*Transition* is in search of the Euramerican language of the future." It would be understatement, today, to call this quest Quixotic. "*Transition*," he concludes his foreword-manifesto, "will continue to seek a pan-symbolic, panlinguistic synthesis in the conception of a four-dimensional universe." The more the contradictions of capitalism split the world into violently clashing nations and classes, the more desperately do bourgeois movements try to find a supra-political means of restoring harmony and unity. From this point of view, the *Transition* group has many interesting similarities with Dr. Buchman's Oxford group, not the least being an understandable reliance on vagueness. There is less difference than one might at first think between Mr. Jolas' "primacy of the creative spirit" and Dr. Buchman's "God is Love."

D. M.

Lenin Next?

"In the Stalinist press in the Soviet Union, a frantic campaign of the wildest calumny has been initiated against Rosa Luxemburg. It is now alleged that Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches organized the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania some forty years ago under instructions of the Czarist police. This horrible slander is apparently intended to serve the purpose of justifying the murder of Rosa Luxemburg's comrades-in-arms by the G.P.U. today."—*Workers Age*, July 9.

O Henry!

There is Henry Seidel Canby and Henry Goddard Leach and Harry Emerson Fosdick and Henry Pratt Fairchild and Henry Fairfield Osborn and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, to name a few. One of our readers has called our attention to this particular order of bourgeois functionaries, all of whom are respectable, s e r i o u s - minded, public-spirited, vaguely cultural, and all of whom have trippingly triple names beginning with 'Henry'.

One can detect the genuine Henry quality by applying three tests: (1) One is never quite sure whether Henry is, at the moment, alive or recently deceased. (Who can say, offhand, in which category Henry Fairfield Osborn, for example, is to be placed?) (2) Since Henry functions as a standardized part in the mechanism of bourgeois culture, any two Henry's are like as two balls in a bearing and as easily interchangeable. (It is impossible to demonstrate any necessary effect on either the *Forum* or the *Saturday Review of Literature* if Henry Goddard Leach were to swap editorial chairs with Henry Seidel Canby.) (3) One always associates Henry with some institution—not necessarily the right one. (Henry Pratt Fairchild is obviously connected with the Museum of Natural History in New York —or is it the National Geographic Society —or the Smithsonian Institute?) Henry's personality, in short, is as institutionalized as a hospital lamb chop. Such feeble shoots of individuality as may once have sprouted in this infertile soil have long since been crushed by the pressure of his civic and cultural responsibilities.

There is a considerable body of congenital Henry's, of course, whose parents were not foresighted enough to name them properly. We wish to rectify this error. As a starter, we nominate for honorary membership in the Henry Club the following, giving them their proper names: Henry Morss Lovett, Henry Jay Nock, Henry Truslow Adams, Henry Edward Wiggam, and Henry Wilbur Cross. For international grand commander of the Henry Club we nominate M. Henri Rolland.

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Immortal as an institution, Henry rarely survives as an individual beyond the memory of his own generation. The polyps pass, but the coral reef remains. This truism can easily be demonstrated by running over a list of eminent Henrys of several generations ago in this country, when the order had an especially luxuriant growth. Beginning with one charter member, Henry Ward Beecher, the roster would include such honorary members as Henry Eliot Norton, Henry W. Eliot, Henry Watson Gilder, Henry Clarence Stedman, Henry Ellery Channing, Henry Dudley Warner, Henry Rowland Sill, Henry Nelson Page, and Henry Everett Hale. This list, by the way, suggests another common trait of the American Henry's: their Anglo-Saxon origin.

Like other respectable old American institutions, the Communist Party has its Henrys. There is space to mention here only charter member Henry Hart and honorary members Henry Berry Burgum, Henry Samuel Sillen, and Henry Corliss Lamont. Not even grand master Henri Rolland, of the clerical collar and wan spirituality, can equal the lubugrious dignity, the funereally institutionalized quality of Henry Hart's platform manner.

The official publishing house for the books Henry so diligently and persistently produces is, of course, Henry Holt & Co. Henry will come into his kingdom when Henry Goddard Leach writes a biography of Henry Clay which is published by Henry Holt.

We invite our readers to send us nominations for the Henry Club. The best hunting grounds we have found for Henrys are the pages of the *Yale Review,* the *Atlantic, Forum, Harpers,* and the *North American Review;* the lists of Pulitzer Prize winners in history and biography; and the reports of proceedings of such bodies as the National Academy of Arts and Letters, the Conference for Progressive Education, the Smithsonian Institute, and the League of American Writers.

Where Is Alexander Woolcott?

We see that the *Nation* is offering its readers a really sensational journalistic treat: the "living philosophies" of a group of writers which includes Lin Yutang, Hendrik Van Loon, and Emil Ludwig.

Waldo Frank at the Keyboard

Mr. Waldo Frank must be given credit for a certain amount of personal integrity. His public questioning of the Moscow trials, which drew down on his head the vituperation of his former intimate, Mr. Earl Browder, and got him blacklisted by the League of American Writers—of which he happened to be president at the time—this was a gesture that took some courage to make. But granting that Mr. Frank's heart is in the right place, it still must be said that his articles on Spain, recently published in the *New Republic,* have established a new low in liberal journalism, which is saying something these days. Mr. Frank has turned the agony and heroism of the Spanish masses into a romantic composition to be played, with sentimental cadenzas, on the Mighty Wurlitzer of his prose style. That festive air of mystical reconnoitering so characteristic of his work is here in even worse taste than usual. From these articles one would never suspect that Mr. Frank has been traveling in and writing about Spain for many years, that he fancies himself, indeed, as the high priest of the inmost shrine of Hispanic culture. He writes like any literary tourist about the 'Spanish national character' which, he assures us, is both individualistic and generous. ("The generosity of the Spaniards is the sharpest trait dividing them from the French and British.") And what a fine contempt he has for "the rationalist minds of Western Europe and America, incapable of understanding Spain" — those dolts who "cannot grasp how the Rebel drive to Tortosa cutting the Republic in two has proven a cathartic, cleaning the army of its impurities and incompetencies and actually strengthening the morale behind the lines." Let us hope the recent loyalist victories on the Ebro have not too badly shattered the morale of Barcelona and Madrid.

No rationalism for Mr. Frank! He speaks lovingly of "the mystery of suffering" and of "irrational, joyous acceptance of the tragic in life," and he assures us the Spanish masses share his mystical enthusiasm. "The Spanish people have what they want, every day." Is this perhaps bread? Land? Peace? No, these are the fantasies of West European rationalists, quite alien to the 'integral' and 'organic' soul of Spain. "They want to struggle,"

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Mr. Frank continues, "And they do struggle —until a bomb or a bullet ends their individual will altogether." So every one is happy in Loyalist Spain today; the masses because they can struggle (until that 'bomb or bullet' comes along) and Mr. Frank because he can write rich beautiful prose for the *New Republic* about it.

Mr. Frank, indeed, has been able to keep his spirits up admirably in the face of the ordeal of the Spanish war. His morale is excellent. "The Spanish people cannot, in my judgment, be beaten, because their will to live has become less the will to survive or to win than *the will to struggle.*" (Italics his, but they don't make the meaning any clearer.) Later on, he tries another formulation: "As I pointed out, many years ago, the Spanish essence has not changed . . . I don't see how the foreign Fascists, short of murder, can beat it." So now we have the Spanish essence as the guarantee that Franco can't win—unless, of course, he resorts in sheer desperation to bloodshed. Mr. Frank admits that even the Spanish essence couldn't stand up against actual killing. But even if Franco takes this final step and wins the war, it won't mean anything, Mr. Frank reassures us, because, although when the revolt first broke out, there were undoubtedly many real Spaniards, full of the genuine national essence, on Franco's side, it took only a few months for the great majority of them to realize their error and go over to the Loyalists either openly or secretly. That leaves practically no one on the rebels' side except the Germans, the Italians, and, of course, General Franco himself. And as for the last, Mr. Frank hints darkly, "I have a suspicion of the state of mind of General Francisco Franco." A journalist who can tune in on the thought waves of eminent personages like this is wasting his talents in the liberal weeklies.

Mr. Frank loves the Spanish politicos almost as much as he loves the Spanish war. From Caballero to Negrin, his heart is big enough to take them all in. Companys is "a slight, subtle, fragile man with dextrous hands and deep grey emotional eyes . . . he talks so well . . ." Pena: "a man whose heavy slow body seems to express the dolor of his people." Azaña: "one of the few great intellectuals of Spain, a cultural critic and statesman." Caballero is "a true and great proletarian leader," Del Vayo "the instinctive Spaniard," Negrin "cold, tempered, double-edged as the best Toledo steel . . . a good cultivated mind." With such a group of supermen opposing him, Franco has done well to hold out as long as he has.

The crude might call this sort of thing bootlicking, the suspicious might speak of 'puffing'. But the truth seems to be that Mr. Frank has simply identified the Loyalists *in toto,* from the humblest soldier up to Negrin, with his long-loved 'Spanish essence'. It is hardly necessary to note that this substitution of a 'national character' for the analysis of concrete social and political data is closely related to Nazi concepts, though this time it happens to be on the side of the angels. And Mr. Frank's pseudo-Christian glorification of suffering as redemption comes disturbingly close to Adolf Hitler's doctrine of purification by sacrifice—on the battlefields. No, it is not this kind of ecstatic and foolish faith in a classless, mystical 'Spanish people' that will defeat Franco but such unromantic and 'rationalistic' factors as working class action in England and France to force their governments to open the borders to Loyalist munition shipments, pressure on the Kremlin by workers both in and outside the Soviet Union to release more than the niggardly munitions Russia has so far sent into Spain, and, above all, a drive to carry on the revolution inside Spain towards its goal of Socialism—which involves getting rid of the politicians Mr. Frank so much admires. In the face of such political problems, Mr. Frank's rainbow mysticism is as powerless as the incantations of a witch doctor to cure typhoid fever.

Note on Literature and Revolution

"This country was not made by Wall Street. It was not made by the big business men. They helped; I do not doubt that; but the little men made America. Read Kenneth Roberts' books, *Rabble in Arms* and *Northwest Passage,* his stories of the sea, and you will realize that America was made by little men, small investments, and hard work. Those were the things that made America." (From a speech made by the late Senator Copeland of New York in Congress several months ago.)

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Straws in the Wind

". . . Few of the writers in *Left Review* seem to have any idea of the issue involved in Spain or China, or are able to understand that the establishment of a 'Popular Front' would be the surest play into the hands of capitalism, that the only possible way to establish communism here is to 'hunger, work illegally, and be anonymous'. The writers (and no doubt the readers) in this paper envisage communism, *not the steps necessary to make communism possible;* they are in the position of the Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution, a position untenable and dead."—Julian Symons, writing in the Summer issue of *Life & Letters Today.*

La Nouvelle Saison, new literary monthly published in Paris, treats Hitlerism and "turncoat Stalinism" as twin phenomena: "No longer may one play the rogue with the future of humanity . . . No longer may one adopt a "tactic" which requires the surrender, even provisionally, of intellectual honesty. Such a tactic deceives above all those who use it; they find themselves isolated from the masses and presently opposed to the masses on the most vital questions."

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